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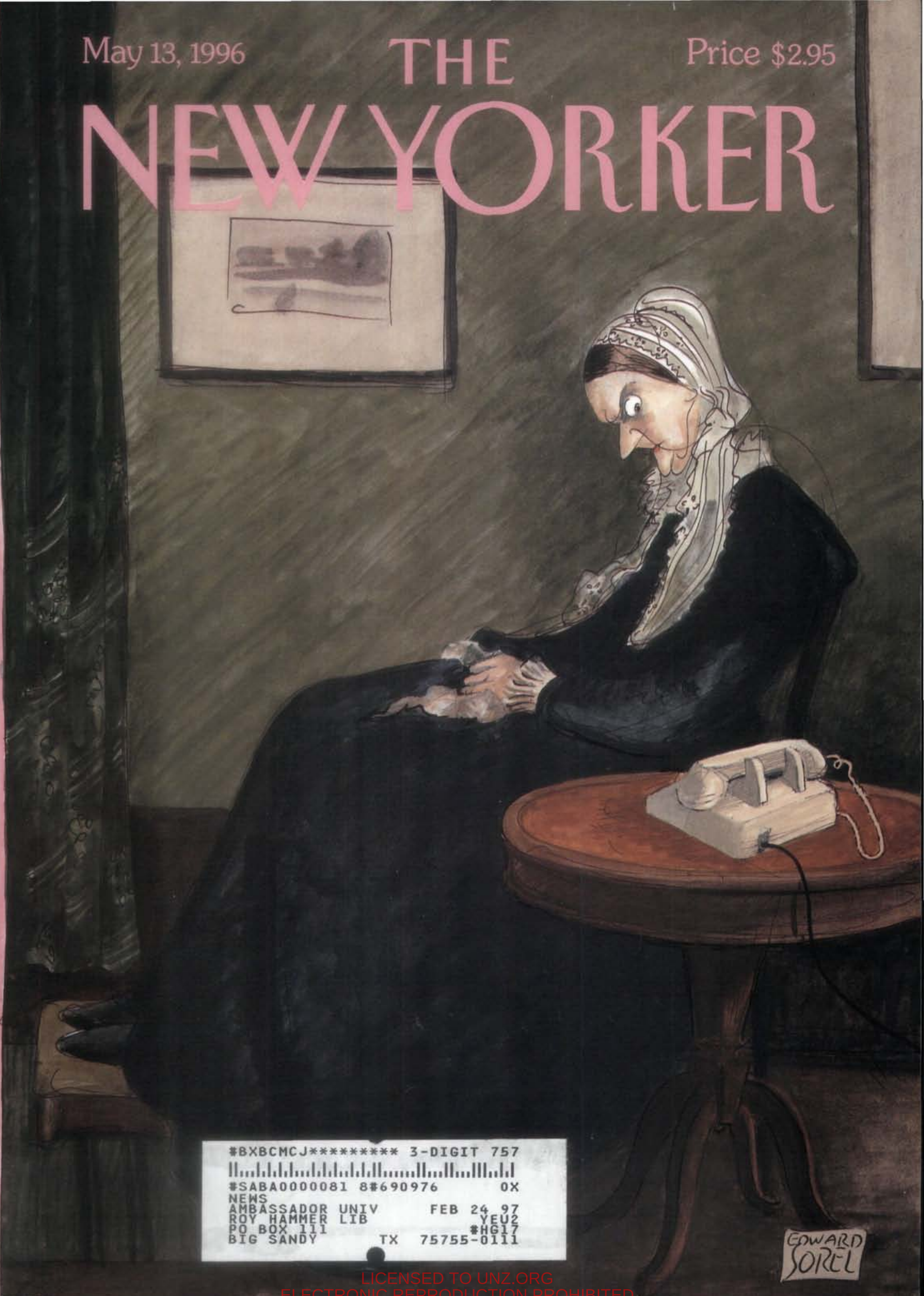

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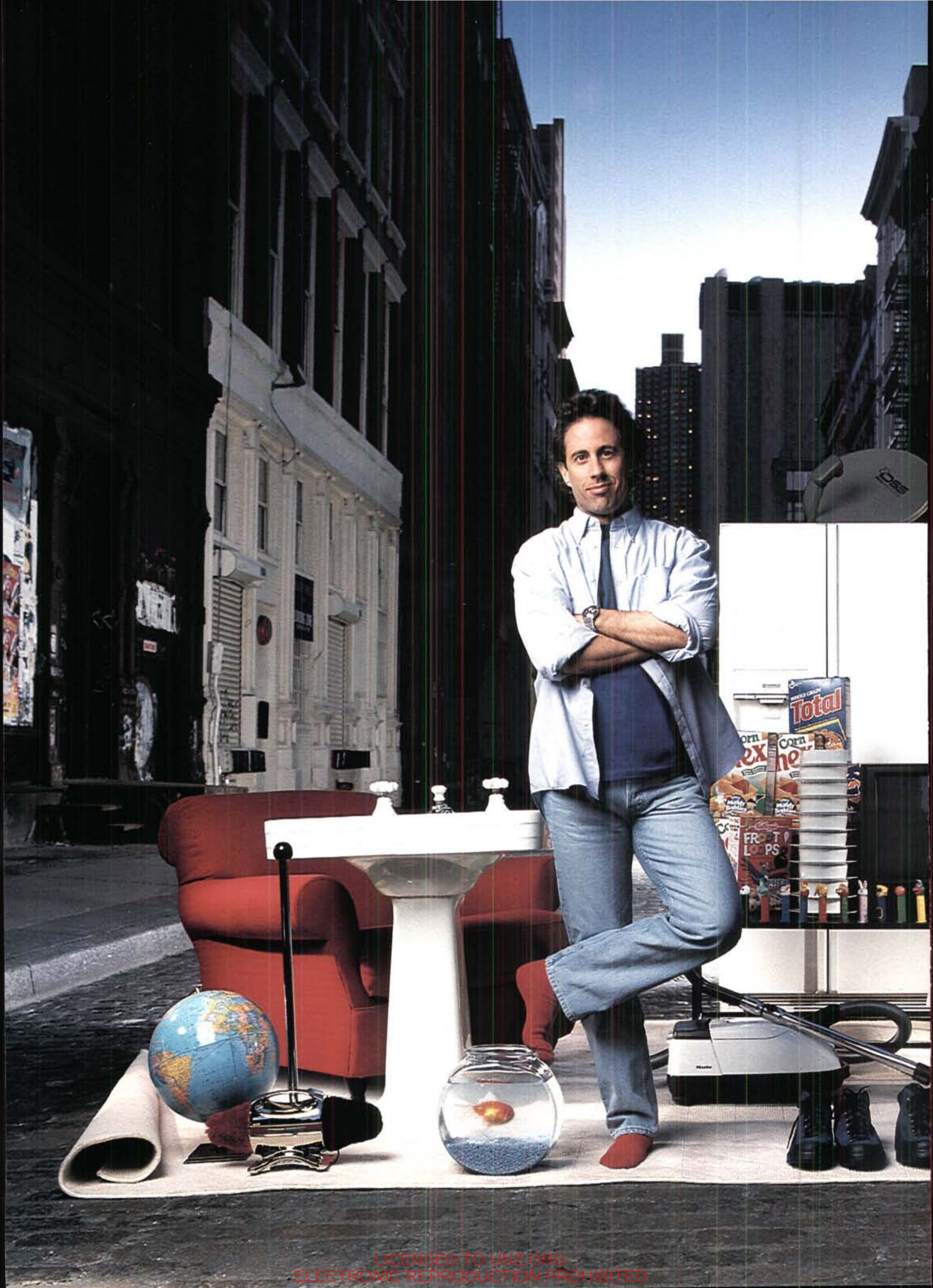

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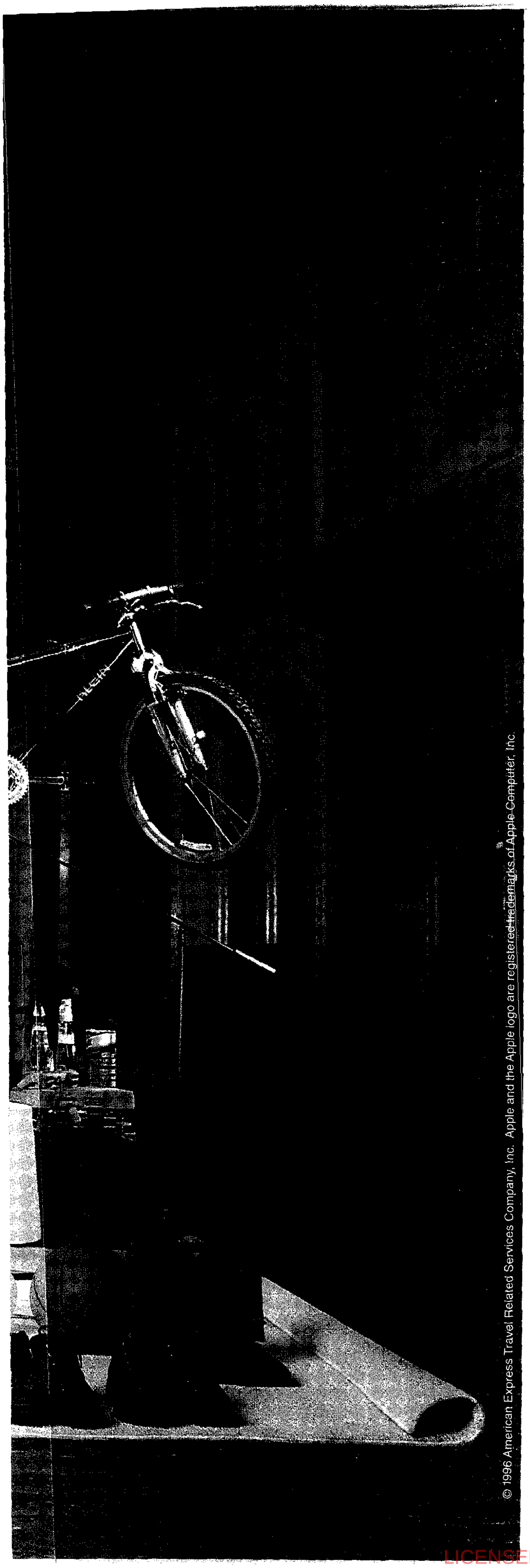

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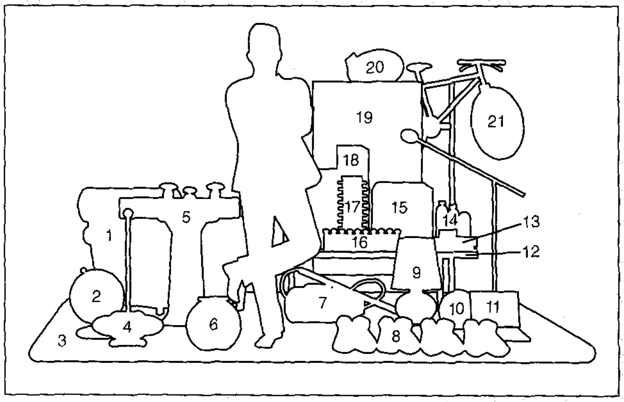

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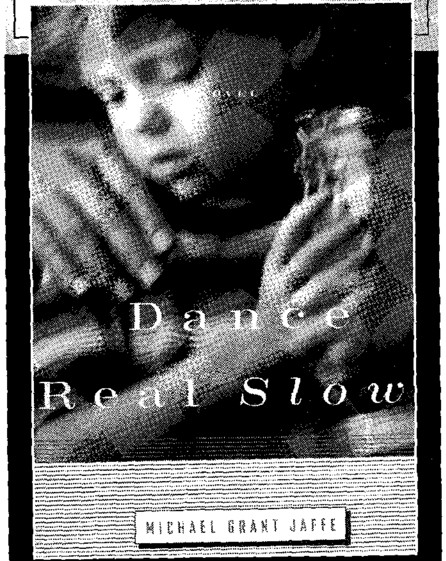

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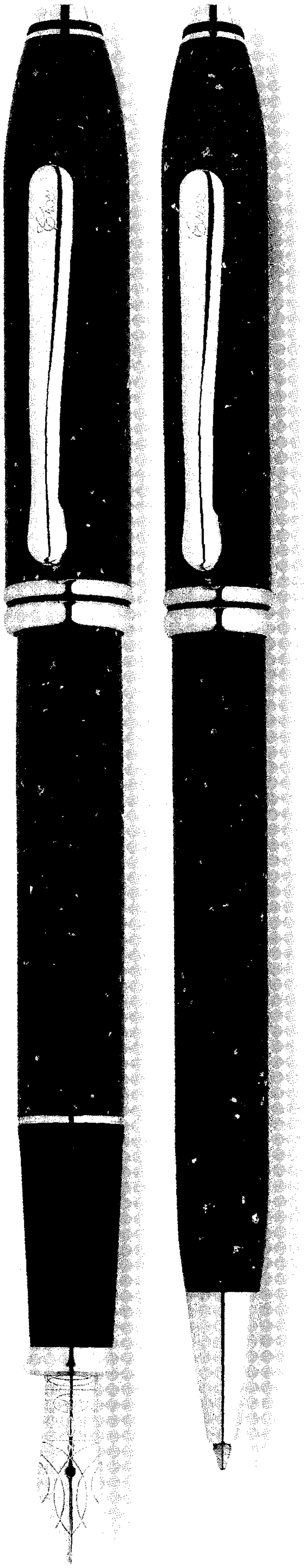

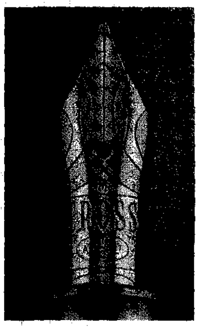

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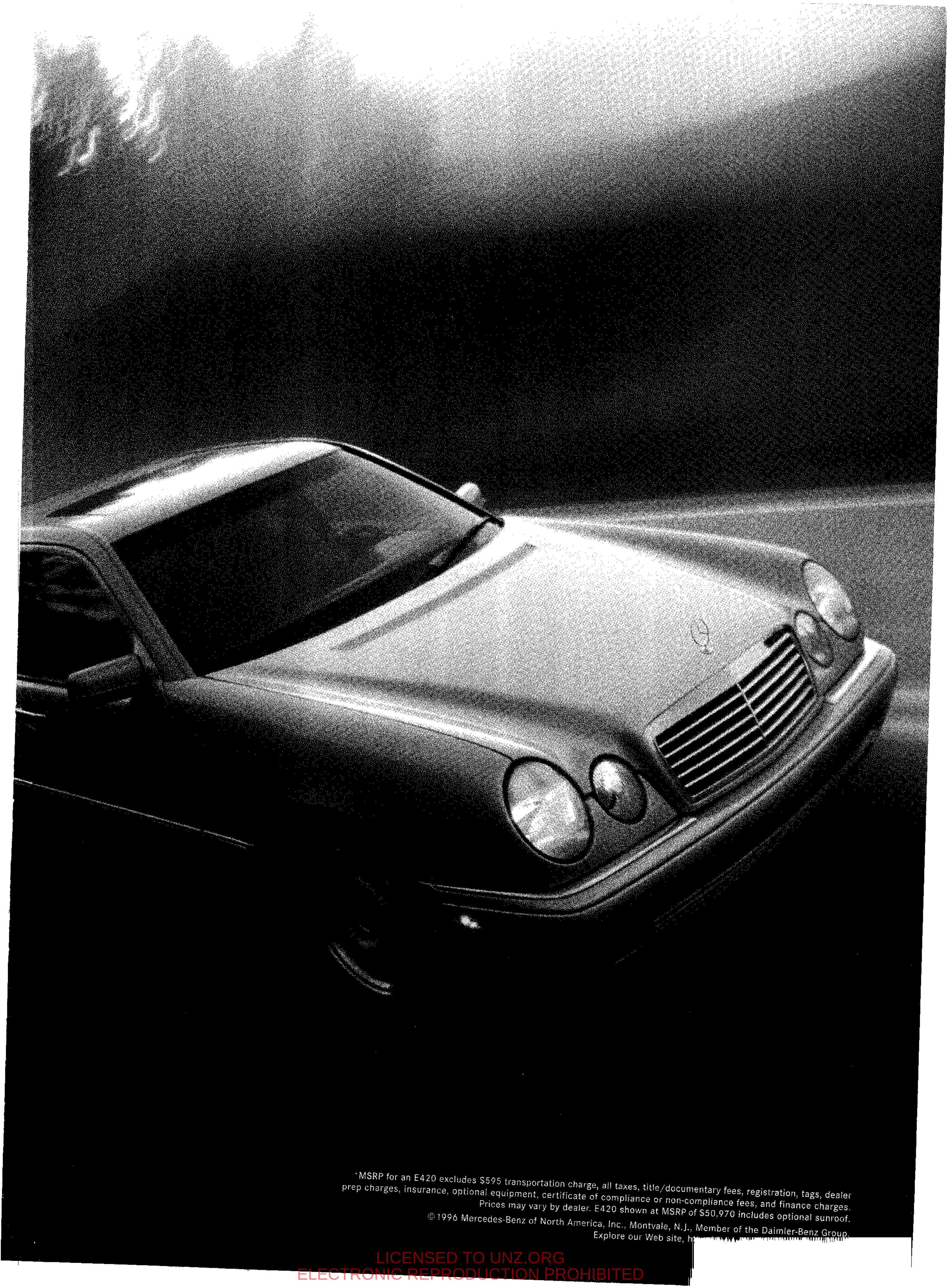

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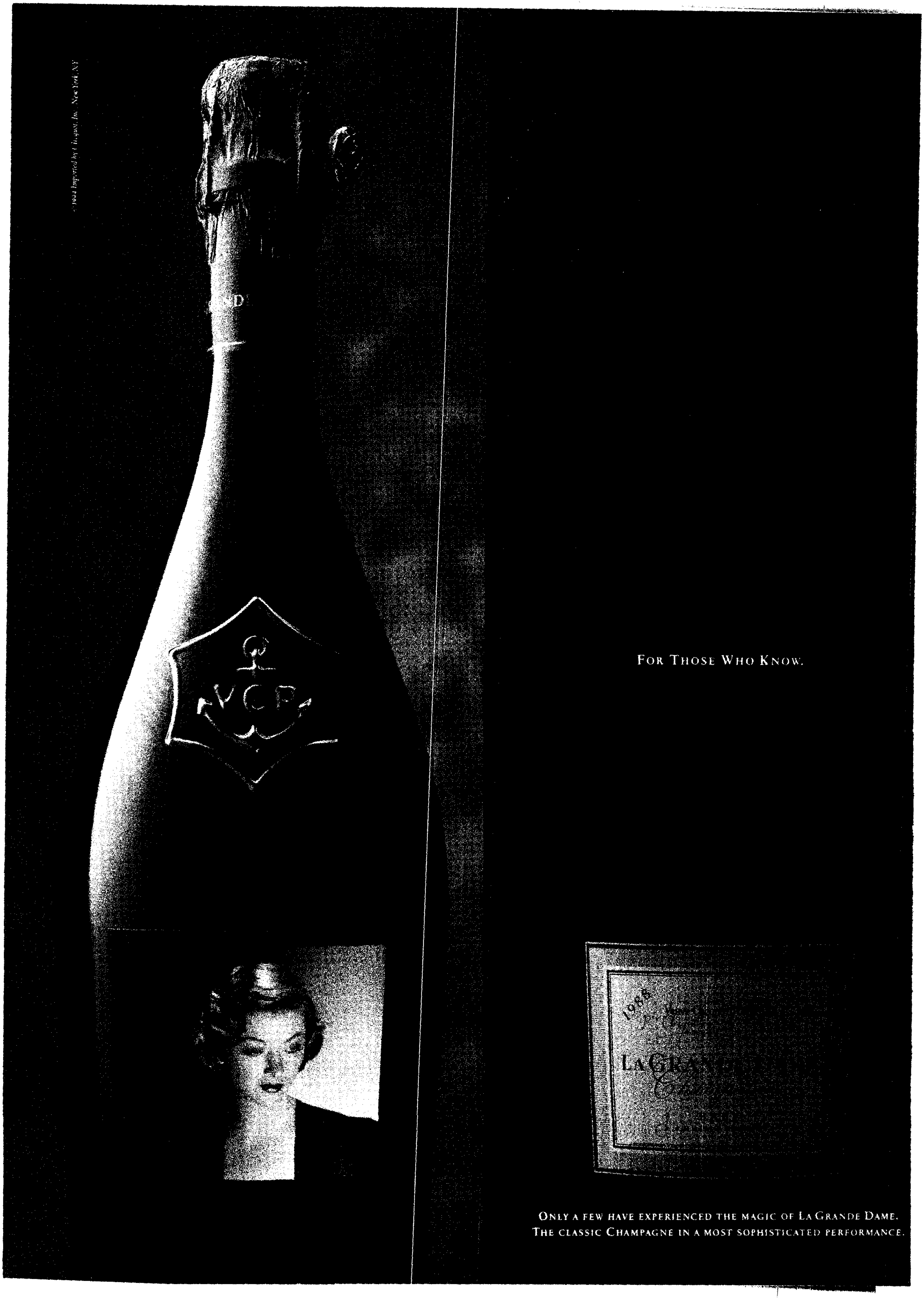
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COMMENT

HYPOCRISY IN ACTION

What's the real Iran-Bosnia scandal?

HYPOCRISY may be the mother's milk of politics, but there are occasions—the controversy now being manufactured in Congress over "secret" Iranian arms shipments to Bosnia is one—when the glass runs over. In the coming weeks, citizens will watch as that late-twentieth-century American art form, the full-dress political scandal, enters its decadent phase. Panelled committee rooms, indignant congressmen, stubborn Administration witnesses—all the familiar trappings will be on display. But the inquisition will plumb only an emptiness: a secret that wasn't a secret, a crime that wasn't a crime. And the real crime, the real secret hypocrisy of our dealings with Bosnia and Iran, will lie in plain sight, unsought and undisturbed.

In September of 1991, the United Nations imposed an arms embargo on the former Yugoslavia. The embargo, predictably, favored the Bosnian Serbs, for they had ready access to the arms stockpiles and factories amassed by the Tito regime. President Bush, determined to avoid an election-year involvement in a messy Balkan war, firmly supported the embargo; and in September of 1992, when a plane loaded with Iranian arms landed in Zagreb, his Administration strongly protested.

That summer and fall, as ghastly images of Muslim prisoners in Serb concentration camps appeared on television, candidate Bill Clinton called for the use of "whatever it takes to stop the slaughter" in Bosnia. But while Clinton, as President, did prove different from his realpolitik predecessor in his sympathy for the Bosnians, he shared Bush's unwillingness to take risks. In the late spring of 1993, Clinton shelved his first Bosnia policy, "lift and strike"—so called because it envisaged lifting the embargo and initiating American air strikes—in the face of strong objections from our European allies. Even so, Republicans in Congress argued vehemently, with Senator Bob Dole arguing most vehemently of all, that the embargo should be lifted—unilaterally, if necessary—so that the Bosnians could "defend themselves." These critics tended to sidestep the fact that the United States would be obliged to send troops to evacuate European peacekeepers and that, in any case, lifting the embargo, by encouraging an all-out Serb offensive, might lead to the destruction of the Bosnians.

In March of 1994, Clinton Administration officials scored a diplomatic success in the Balkans by fashioning a tenuous "federation" between Bosnian Muslims and Croats. By now, American intervention—so often dangled before the hapless Bosnians—had been effectively ruled out, and only Bosnian and Croat victories over

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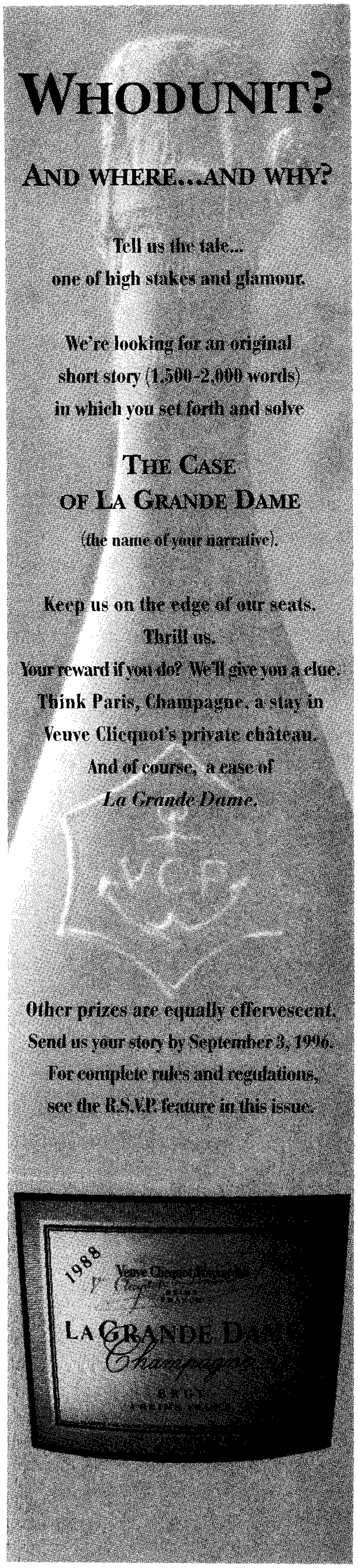

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the triumphant Serbs could "even the playing field" and make possible a broader settlement. And so, during the last days of April, 1994, when the Croatian President, Franjo Tudjman, approached the American Ambassador, Peter Galbraith, and inquired what the Clinton Administration would say to his establishing a full-scale "pipeline" of arms from Iran to Bosnia (a modest stream of weapons was already flowing from Islamic countries, Iran included), Galbraith responded that he had "no instructions." This non-answer answer, we now learn from the Los Angeles *Times*, in almost the only bit of genuine news in this affair, had been formulated the night before, "at the highest levels"—that is, with the involvement of President Clinton himself.

Within a week, an Iranian cargo plane had touched down at the Zagreb airport and begun unloading its cargo of arms; a week after that, news of the shipments appeared on the front page of the Washington *Post*. Within months, Congress passed a law forbidding the Administration to enforce the embargo. In April of 1995, the *Post* again reported that, with Washington's "tacit acceptance," Iran had continued to deliver "large quantities of arms to Bosnia's Muslim-led government." This non-secret secret policy soon bore fruit. The rearmed Croatians and Bosnians won decisive victories; and the ethnic cleansing and bloodletting of that summer, along with the savagery of the Serb counterattacks, made possible the map, faintly inscribed though it is, that was conceived at Dayton.

From a clutch of congressional committees we will now hear this or that honorable member profess himself, like Captain Renault, "shocked, shocked" to learn that Iranian arms had cleared the way for Dayton. Since the Iranian shipments had become a matter of public record a few days after they began, the grounds for shock—Senator Dole has accused the Administration not only of "misleading the American people" but of "duplicitous" behavior—seem to be rather thin.

But one Dole charge has the ring of truth: that the Clinton Administration has allowed a strong Iranian presence in the Balkans, and that this presence now constitutes "one of the most serious threats to our military forces in Bosnia." Clinton's policy, while a tactical success, does look to be a strategic failure. Speaker Newt Gingrich blames this on "extraordinarily amateurish" policymaking; but the causes lie deeper, both in the sad hypocritical history of the United States in the Bosnian war (the Americans promised help, but only the Iranians delivered) and in the way our national-security apparatus functions—or, rather, a decade after Iran-Contra, malfunctions.

The story, when it's pieced together, seems a bureaucratic version of a door-slamming French farce. President Clinton, his National Security Adviser, Anthony Lake, and Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott meet aboard Air Force One—it is April 27, 1994, and they are returning, aptly, from Nixon's funeral—and decide to instruct Ambassador Galbraith to say he has "no instructions" regarding the Iranian shipments. No one mentions this to the Director of Central Intelligence or to the Secretary of Defense. C.I.A. officers monitoring arms traffic soon begin to suspect that—shades of Iran-Contra!—someone is conducting a covert operation without the Agency's knowledge. Meanwhile, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke is drafting a program whereby Turkey, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia would replace Iran as the main arms suppliers to the Bosnians. Holbrooke's program—which would have greatly reduced the Iranian presence in Bosnia—is finally rejected by Lake and Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who fear angering the Europeans.

But the Bosnians, excited by Holbrooke's idea, are chattering on about it, and the C.I.A. is listening. Finally, Ambassador Galbraith, in a discussion with his (by now highly suspicious) C.I.A. station chief, manages to leave the impression that he himself is indeed "in the loop" on the Iranian shipments. The C.I.A. man reports this to Langley, and James Woolsey, the Director of Central Intelligence, takes the matter to the White House—whereupon Lake, who helped initiate the policy in the first place, orders a formal investigation by the President's Intelligence Oversight Board. Six months later, the board apparently concludes—the report has not been released, though Congress is demanding it—that nothing illegal has been done, and the White House is guilty only of "excessive secrecy." And thus, in this political season, the scandal begins.

One hears in this odd tale the echo of an earlier time, when the perversion of national-security bureaucracies rendered them impotent to carry out their duties. The President keeps vital information from his intelligence chief and his Defense Secretary; the C.I.A. spends its time tracking what it believes to be rogue covert activities, and then tattles to the White House. Meanwhile, a promising plan to replace Iranian arms with arms from friendlier sources is rejected because it might anger the Europeans. Beneath the layers of hypocrisy in the burgeoning scandal, this last seems the saddest. After all the hearings and debates and trials over covert action and public disclosure and hypocrisy in high places, when an occasion arises in which the intelligence bureaucracy might serve some useful function, it—along with the national-security agencies around and above it—finds itself too choked by the ghosts of scandals and controversies past to do anything of much use to anyone.

—Mark Danner

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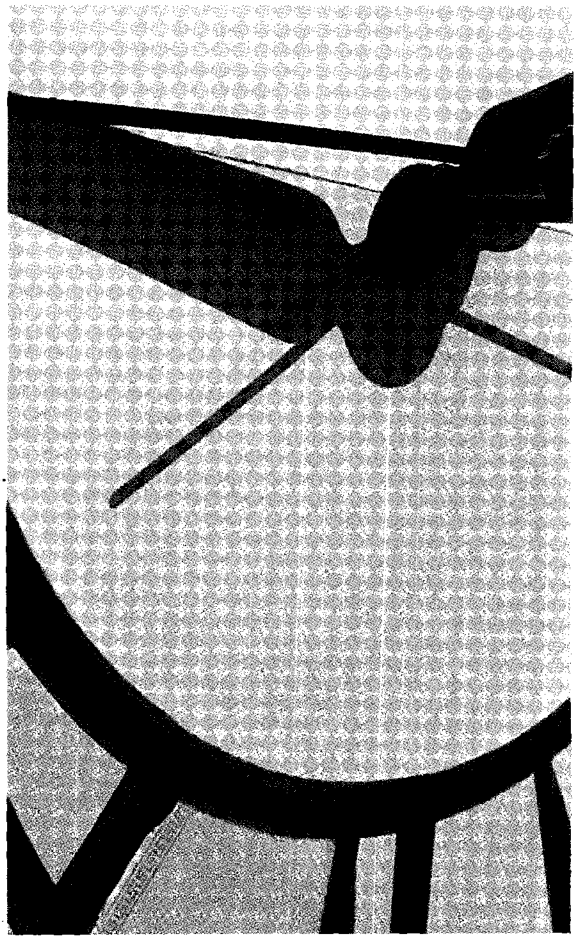

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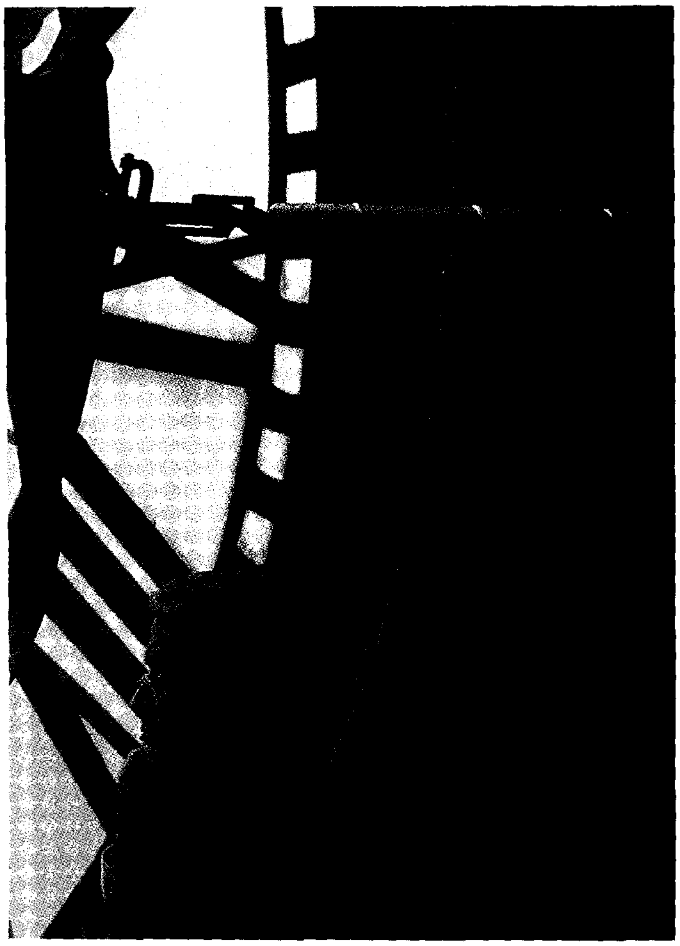

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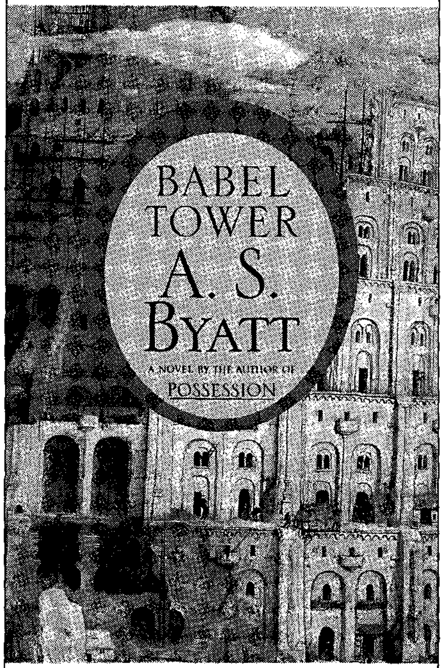

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IN THE MAIL

ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS

I appreciated the Women's Issue (February 26th & March 4th), because it paid attention to the diverse problems that women face, and I was pleased to see you continue that tradition in your March 18th issue, with an article about Charlene Barshefsky, the Acting United States Trade Representative ("The Negotiator," by Elsa Walsh). As I read the piece, however, I became less and less pleased. The article is about a woman who is an important figure in the current Administration, yet half of it is devoted to descriptions of how much her family misses her when she's gone and of the struggle involved in being both a mother and a successful negotiator. I don't believe I have ever seen an article in your pages about a successful man which gave so much space to his female partner's feelings when he goes on business trips and she has to stay home with the kids. I would have felt more comfortable if Walsh had directly addressed the fact that Barshefsky's husband is playing a role that many wives of successful men have played for years. Instead, she adds to stereotypes that accuse successful women with careers of abandoning their family responsibilities.

Beth Wrightson
Oakland, Calif.

I thought the Women's Issue was supposed to be about women, not sensational women. I'm a Jane Doe type who hasn't committed any crimes or written any books or held any prominent positions. I am a wife and a mother who took time off from my career as a teacher to be with my kids, but I have little in common with the supermoms in Mark Singer's "Domestic Life" article. Once again, I've been taken for granted—but this time it was by women, not men.

Elaine M. Guihan
Abidjan, Le Côte d'Ivoire

HARDBOILED AUDEN?

To Nicholas Jenkins's lucid account of W. H. Auden in New York ("A Critic at Large," April 1st), and particularly the writing of Auden's poem, "September 1, 1939," I would like to add the possibility of another literary coincidence. Jenkins notes that the opening lines of Auden's poem, "I sit in one of the dives/On Fifty-second Street," echo a poem of Ogden Nash's, but I wonder if those lines may not owe more to Dashiell Hammett than to Nash. The beginning of "The Thin Man" is "I was leaning against the bar in a speakeasy on Fifty-second Street." Knowing what we do of the poet's affection for American camp, there is reason to suspect that the hardboiled self-consciousness of Hammett may have contributed to Auden's work.

Alan Michael Parker
Erie, Pa.

ANOTHER PROPOSAL

Christopher Buckley (in his Shouts & Murmurs "Moodest Proposals," April 15th) missed this neat solution to the problem of Britain's mad cows:

> KALAMAZOO, MICH.—Dr. Jack Kevorkian offered today to provide "a dignified end" for Britain's 4.7 million demented bovines. Kevorkian disclosed that he was heading to London on a humanitarian mission during which he would try to meet with British Prime Minister John Major. "I'm heeding the call of the cows," Kevorkian declared. "They need me."

Robert Neuwirth
Brooklyn, N.Y.

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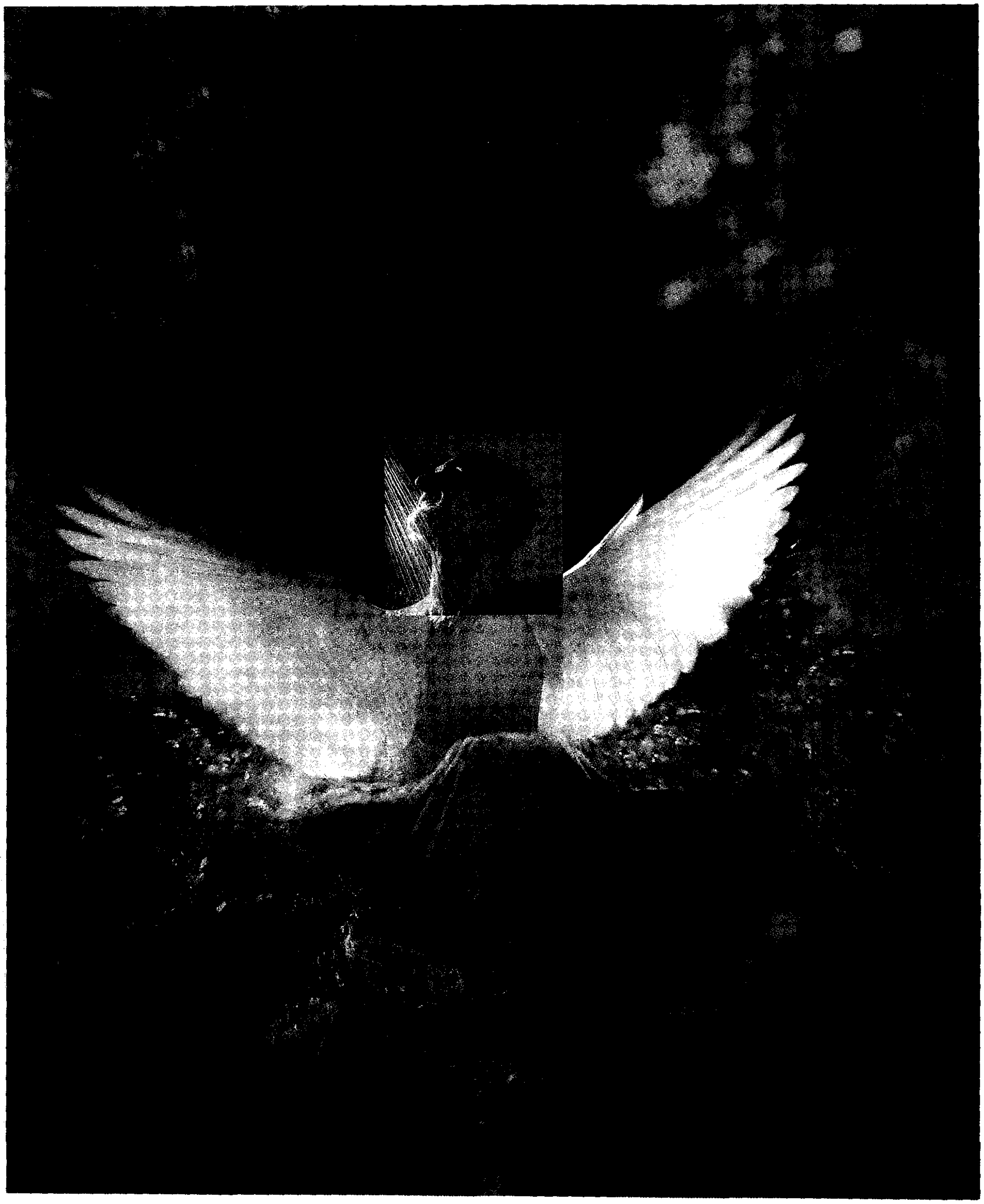

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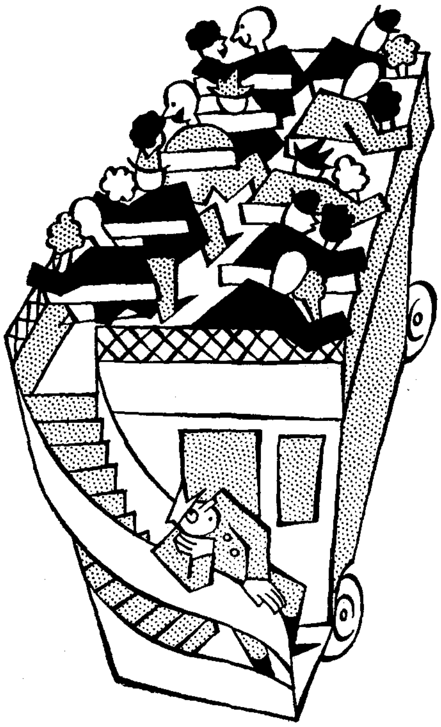

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Ancient History—Vivienne Benesch and Michael Rupert portray a Catholic-Jewish couple in their thirties whose cultural differences wreak havoc on their ostensibly perfect relationship, in David Ives's new comedy. Directed by John Rando. In previews. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

Arts and Leisure—A new satire, about a drama critic in crisis, by Steve Tesich. Directed by JoAnne Akalaitis. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

By the Sea, by the Sea, by the Beautiful Sea—Manhattan Theatre Club wraps up the season with an evening of one-acts, all set on the same beach in a single day, by Terrence McNally, Joe Pintauro, and Lanford Wilson. With Lee Brock, Tim Carhart, and Mary Beth Fisher. Leonard Foglia is the director. In previews. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

The Chang Fragments—Abandoned by the father, an Asian family attempts to put together a new life, in an absurdist drama by the Philippine-born playwright Han Ong. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

The Cocoanuts—The Irving Berlin–George S. Kaufman musical, which originally starred the Marx Brothers. Richard Sabellico is the director and choreographer. In previews through May 11. Opens May 12 at 7 and runs through May 26. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

Comédie-Française—Final performances in the French national theatre's engagement at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. May 7 and May 9-11 at 8 and May 12 at 3: Marivaux's "The Inconstant Lovers," directed by Jean-Pierre Miquel. Performances are in French with English supertitles. (Majestic, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 1-718 636-4100.)

Dark Rapture—Scott Glenn and Marisa Tomei star in Eric Overmyer's thriller. Scott Ellis is the director. In previews. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103.)

Ensemble Studio Theatre—This year's six-week marathon of one-acts begins May 8 at 7:30 with Arthur Miller's "Elegy for a Lady," David Ives's "Degas, C'est Moi," Howard Korder's "Geliebteh," and Cherie Vogelstein's "Cats and Dogs." The first series runs through May 19; the marathon continues through June 16. (549 W. 52nd St. 247-3405.)

1 Hour Without Television—In Jaime Salom's comedy, a couple celebrating their anniversary turn off the TV set and end up thrashing out their relationship. A Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre production, directed by Miriam Colon. Previews begin May 8. (304 W. 47th St. 354-1293.)

The Skriker—A fantasia about otherworldly goings on in England, written by British playwright Caryl Churchill and directed by Mark Wing-Davey. In previews through May 11. Opens May 12 at 7 and runs through May 26. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

Tartuffe: Born Again—Elizabeth Berridge, John Glover, and David Schramm lead the cast in Freyda Thomas's latest Molière adaptation, in which the antihero has become a televangelist. Directed by David Saint. In previews. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

Three in the Back, Two in the Head—A man falls into a web of government intrigue when he attempts to find his father's murderers, in a thriller by Jason Sherman. Previews begin May 13. (MCC, 120 W. 28th St. 727-7765.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Antigone in New York—The Vineyard Theatre has given the Polish-born playwright Janusz Glowacki's tragicomic portrait of homelessness a fine production, and the actors—Ned Eisenberg as a wily Pole who survives on denial, Steven Skybell as a Russian Jewish intellectual resigned to near hopelessness, Priscilla Lopez as a sweetly loony Puerto Rican, and Monti Sharp as a cold cop who wishes they would all disappear—are excellent. But Glowacki, in attempting not only to give the homeless a human face but also to condemn the complicated system that created them, never focusses quite enough humor or pathos on either tremendous task, and you end up feeling the same pang of guilty boredom that you feel on the street: Have I become this immune? (108 E. 15th St. 353-3874. Closes May 12.)

Bein' with Behan—The talented and hardworking Michael L. Kavanagh portrays the late poet, playwright, and political activist Brendan Behan in a formulaic two-hour monologue—and the audience, unlike the actor, doesn't have the solace of a pint. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 279-4200.)

Below the Belt—Richard Dresser's brilliant dark comedy is set in "an industrial compound in a distant land," but it hits close to home in its dead-on absurdist take on modern life. Judd Hirsch, Robert Sean Leonard, and Jude Ciccolella could be slightly sharper, but the production, under the direction of Gloria Muzio, is nevertheless very satisfying. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Closes May 12.)

Big—A new musical, based on the 1988 movie. Directed by Mike Ockrent, with choreography by Susan Stroman. (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

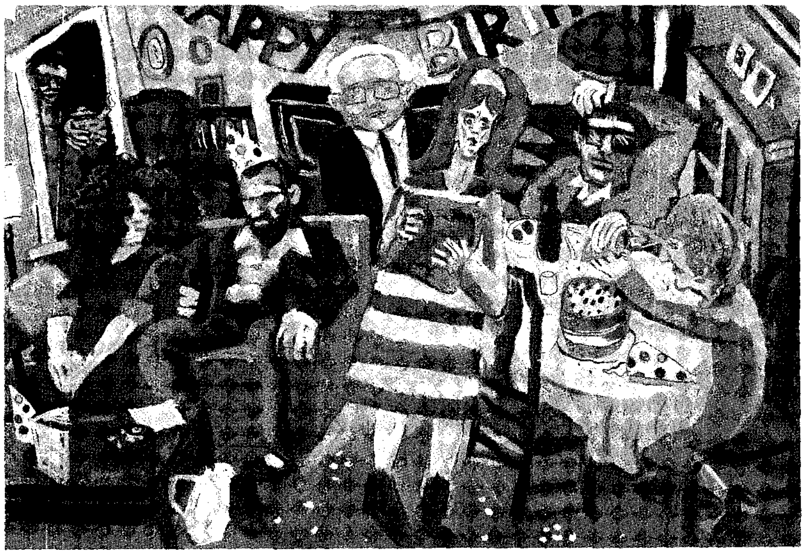
Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk—Director George C. Wolfe and dancer-choreographer Savion Glover's heroically energetic African-American musical. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/4/95.) (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

Brutality of Fact—Keith Reddin's new play, starring Leslie Lyles, Rebecca Nelson, and Scotty Bloch, takes a darkly comic look at the family ties that bind. (Camilla's, 632 Broadway, between Bleecker and Houston Sts. 475-2264.)

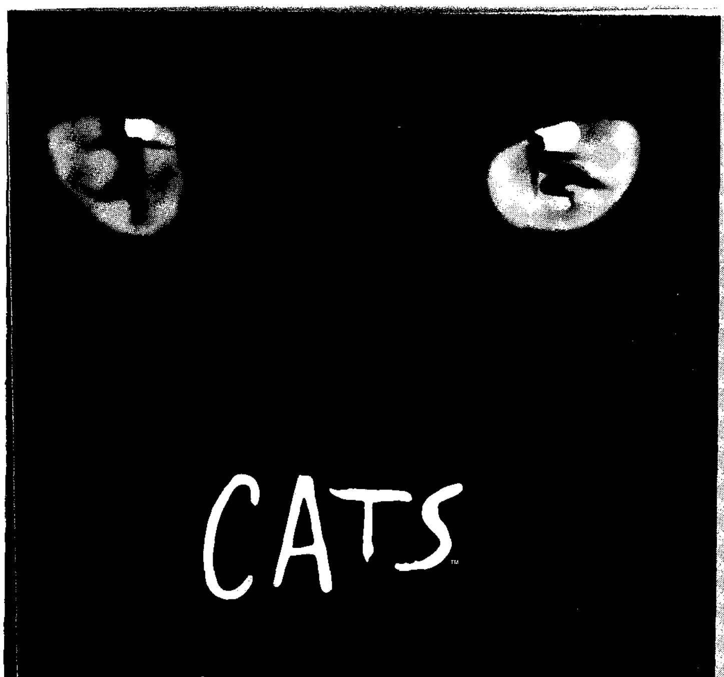
The Bundle—An Irondale Ensemble Project production of Edward Bond's 1978 epic drama, which traces the life of an abandoned child. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 633-1292. Closes May 25.)

Buried Child—Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre brings Sam Shepard's 1978 play to Broadway, under the direction of Gary Sinise. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 719-4099.)

Checkmates—Ron Milner's 1988 drama about the relationships of two African-American couples (one of the Second World War generation, the other a pair of yuppies), to each other and to the world, achieves a difficult balance: it takes on the big issues—racism, generational conflict, sex, abortion, religion—without being preachy, while also making the characters real (and often very funny) people. Arthur French's performance as the older man is the highlight; he ranges from a lusty, scared nineteen-year-old to a charmingly crusty retiree, making you feel the weight of every step in between and his pleasure in what he's found along the way. Ruby Dee, Peter Jay Fernandez, and Amy-Monique Waddell round out a terrific ensemble cast. Directed by Woodie King, Jr.; produced by the New Federal Theatre. (Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. 279-4200. Closes May 12.)



The New Group's production of Stephen Bill's "Curtains."



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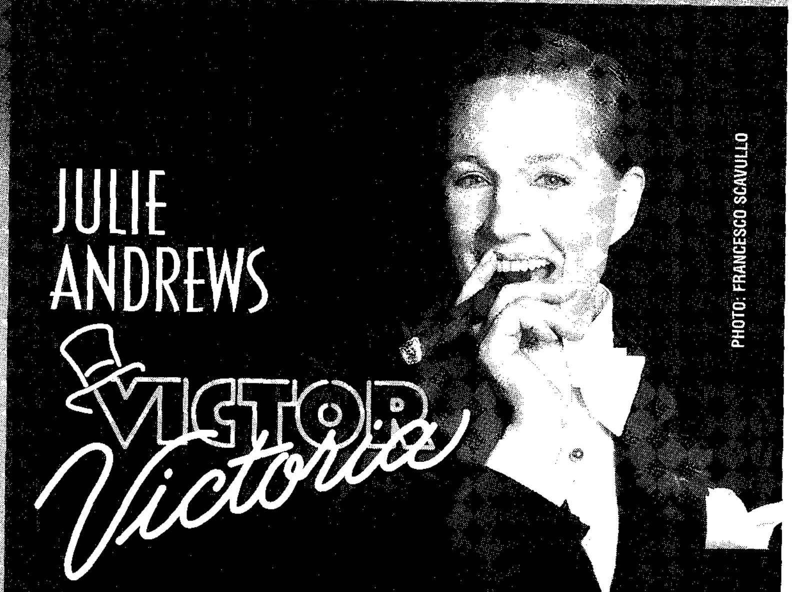
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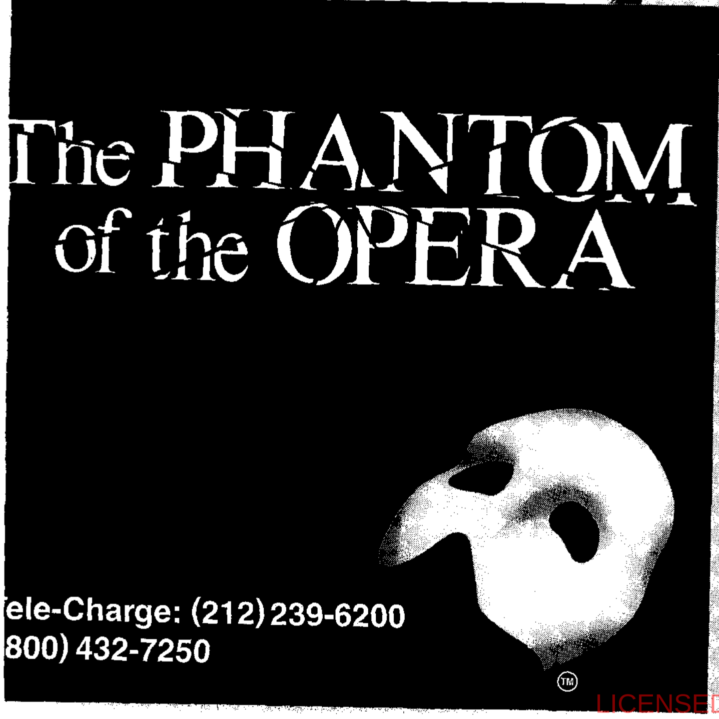
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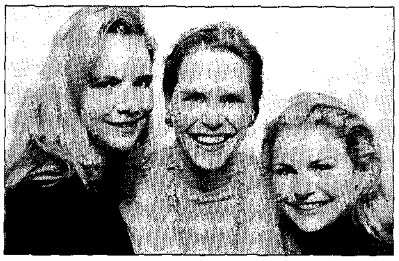
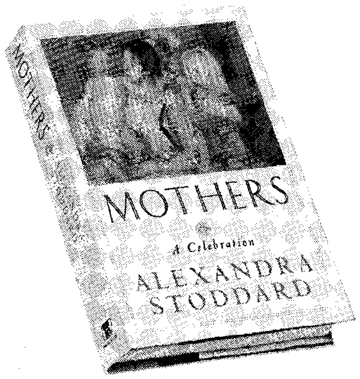


A Celebration

ALEXANDRA STODDARD

America's best-loved lifestyle philosopher reflects on the joys and challenges of motherhood in this moving exploration of the link between mother and child. With thoughtful commentary on balancing career and family, practicing self-renewal through play, and nurturing ourselves while we care for our children, *Mothers* is a book every generation of women can treasure.



Also by Alexandra Stoddard, available in paperback from Avon Books:

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WILLIAM MORROW

Cowgirls—By the end of this appealing, if somewhat predictable, musical comedy, three chamber musicians have been transformed into fringe-wearin', honky-tonkin' cowgirls. Mary Murfitt, the show's composer and lyricist, is hilarious as an uptight violinist learning how to shake it. Betsy Howie, who wrote the book, is also in the fine cast. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

Curtains—Stephen Bill's 1987 dark comedy about aging, directed by Scott Elliott, in a New Group production. (INTAR, 420 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes here May 12. Reopens May 21 at the John Houseman.)

A Delicate Balance—Lincoln Center Theatre presents Edward Albee's unbalanced-family drama, first staged in 1966. With John Carter, George Grizzard, Rosemary Harris, Mary Beth Hurt, Elaine Stritch, and Elizabeth Wilson. Directed by Gerald Gutierrez. (Plmouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

A Fair Country—A neatly packaged but hollow new play by Jon Robin Baitz, about an American diplomat in South Africa. (3/11/96) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Forbidden Hollywood—Gerard Alessandrini's hit-and-miss movie-biz sendup. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

Friends—An absurdist comedy by Kobo Abé, translated from the Japanese by Donald Keene, in a Pan Asian Repertory Theatre staging. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 245-2660. Closes May 11.)

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum—The 1962 musical, starring Nathan Lane as the Roman slave Pseudolus. Directed by Jerry Zaks. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

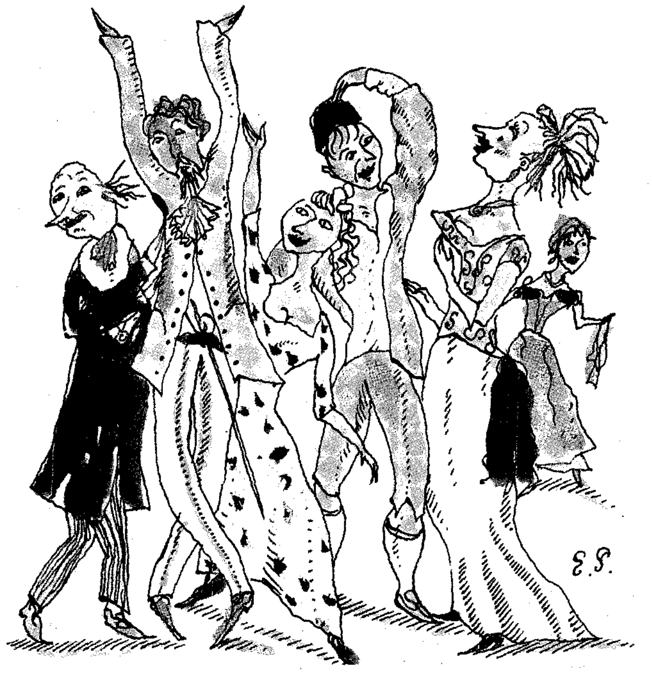
I Do! I Do!—A revival of the 1964 musical by the folks who created "The Fantasticks," Tom Jones (no, not *that* Tom Jones) and Harvey Schmidt, which follows a couple through fifty years of wedded bliss, bumps, and blahs. The show is predictably, and more or less inoffensively, charming, and David Garrison and Karen Ziemba, as the initially and ultimately happy couple, are, you'll pardon the expression, engaging. The two-piano accompaniment is played by Valerie Gelbert and Tim Stella (who is also the musical director). Will Mackenzie directed. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

An Ideal Husband—The recent London staging of Oscar Wilde's comedy, directed by Peter Hall. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Inherit the Wind—Based on the Scopes "monkey trial" of 1925, Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee's 1955 play is undeniably melodramatic, but it's also a thoughtful, powerful explication of religious and political issues that we still haven't figured out. With George C. Scott and Charles Durning as the duelling attorneys, the air crackles even when they're not saying a word. Directed by John Tillinger. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6280. Closes June 2.)

Jack: A Night on the Town with John Barrymore—Nicol Williamson's one-man show, which he co-wrote with his director, Leslie Megahey, is a mildly entertaining and fairly unilluminating couple of hours. Barrymore's self-love was indistinguishable from his self-hatred, and his tumultuous falls and rises and marriages ("bus accidents") make him a natural for the flamboyant, mercurial Williamson, but the best moments aren't the ones when Williamson acts like Barrymore; they're the ones when he seems to be mischievously acting like Williamson. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

The King and I—In a word, magnificent. Hats off to Donna Murphy, as Anna, Lou Diamond Phillips, as the King of Siam, and everyone else (including Rodgers and Hammerstein, of course) who had a hand in this production. Christopher Renshaw directs. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)



The Comédie-Française presents "The Inconstant Lovers."

EMMANUEL PIERRE

Love Thy Neighbor—In his latest two-hour monologue, Jackie Mason prowls the stage like a rabid penguin, parcelling out tough love with equal-opportunity glee. His range may be limited, but his timing is perfect, and the house rocks with laughter. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

A Midsummer Night's Dream—The Royal Shakespeare Company, after stops in San Francisco, Chicago, and Washington, D.C., is now offering New Yorkers its acclaimed production of the great comedy. Perhaps the road has taken its toll—what's on view here is no longer robust but is rather droll and unmagical. It goes down smoothly enough, but there isn't an afterglow. Still, it's an opportunity to see a host of good actors who usually work on the other side of the Atlantic, among them Alex Jennings, Lindsay Duncan, and Desmond Barrit. Directed by Adrian Noble, the R.S.C.'s artistic director. (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100. Closes May 26.)

Molly Sweeney—Brian Friel's 1994 play owes much to an Oliver Sacks case study, but Friel didn't reimagine the material, and the play, which he directed, comes across as a staged reading of an essay. (1/29/96) (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400. Closes May 12.)

The Night of the Iguana—Robert Falls's production does justice to Tennessee Williams's 1961 play about spiritual longings. In the central role of the feverish fallen minister, William Petersen gives you the feeling that there is something holy in him wrestling to get out. Cherry Jones has a quiet gravity that compels attention; Marsha Mason seems right at home as an earthy voluptuary. (4/8/96) (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400. Closes May 19.)

Papa—Len Cariou plays Ernest Hemingway in a drama by John deGroot. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Rent—The rock opera has moved uptown to Broadway's Nederlander Theatre. (2/19/96) (208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.)

Seven Guitars—August Wilson's exciting new play, which flashes back to the final days of a Pittsburgh blues singer (Keith David), sends us stirring news of black life in the late forties. The seven guitars of the title are the seven memorable characters whose high times and dashed dreams Wilson turns into beautiful, complex music—a funky, wailing, irresistible Chicago blues. Lloyd Richards is the director. (4/15/96) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

The Slow Drag—Very loosely based on events in the life of the jazzman Billy Tipton, whose obituaries outed him as a woman, this three-character dramatic musical is worth taking in for its sizzling turns by Ann Crumb (as the torch-singing wife) and Vernel Bagneris (as the best friend, who passes for white). In the Tipton role, Peggy Shaw (of the Split Britches troupe) is far more convincing as a man than as a musician. Carson Kreitzer's script offers a lot of grandiloquent monologues, but it barely allows the performers to interact, and it berates the public for asking the very questions about Tipton's love life that make the story so intriguing in the first place. Directed by Elise Thoron. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074. Closes May 12.)

State Fair—This lively, colorful stage version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's 1945 movie musical is a pleasure, despite some weak perfomances in key roles. Co-directed by James Hammerstein (son of) and Randy Skinner, who also did the choreography. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Tovah: Out of Her Mind—A new one-woman show from Tovah Feldshuh, presented by the Jewish Repertory Theatre. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

Treasure Island—The Blue Light Theatre Company presents a theatrical version of the Robert Louis Stevenson classic, directed by B. H. Barry. Written by Vernon Morris. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 279-4200. Closes May 19.)

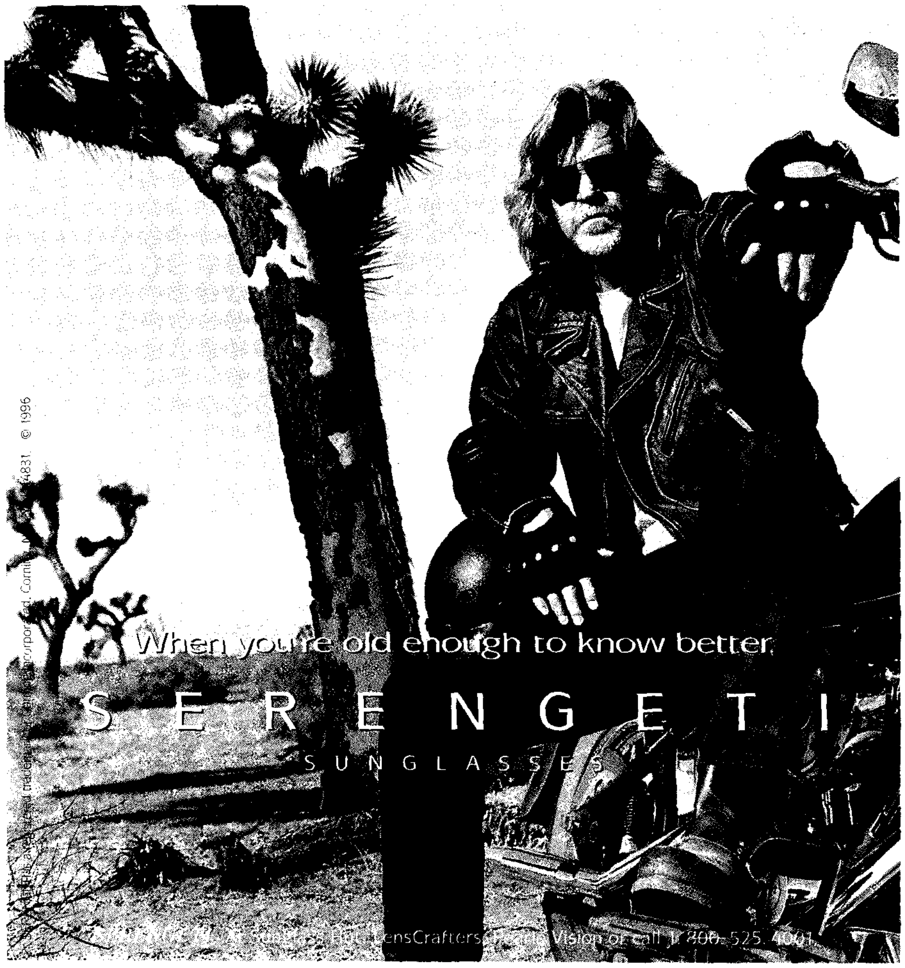
Valley Song—The South African playwright Athol Fugard's latest drama, about the effects of political change in his homeland, has returned to Manhattan Theatre Club. With LisaGay Hamilton and Marius Weyers. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Venus—Suzan-Lori Parks's new drama, based on true events, tells the story of an African woman who was exhibited as "the Hottentot Venus" by an English circus in the early nineteenth century. Directed by Richard Foreman. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes May 19.)

Virgins and Other Myths—Colin Martin's one-man show—a sort of "This Gay Boy's Life." (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **THE FOOD CHAIN:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **MASTER CLASS:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **MRS. KLEIN:** Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200. . . . **MOON OVER BUFFALO:** Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-



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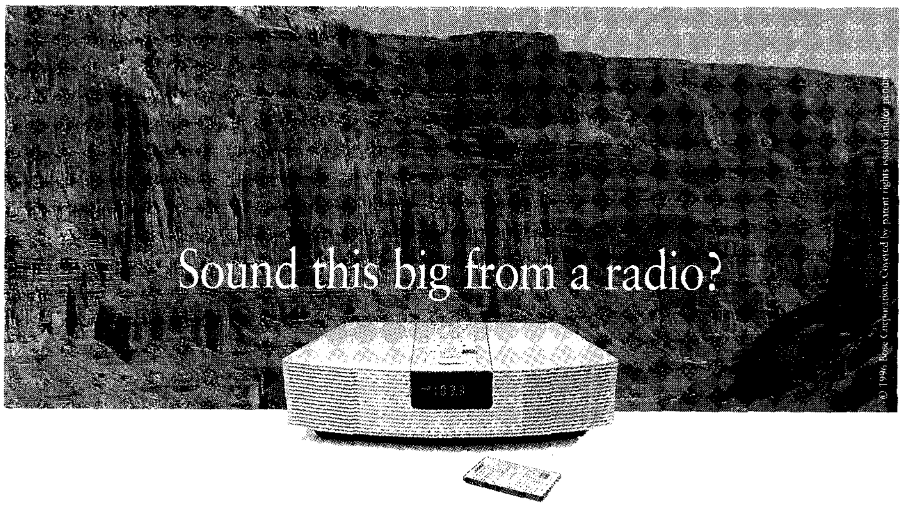

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6200. . . . **PICASSO AT THE LAPIN AGILE:** Promenade, *Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.* (Closes May 26.). . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100. . . . **SHOW BOAT:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SUNSET BOULEVARD:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. . . . **VICTOR/VICTORIA:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

DANCE

New York City Ballet—May 8 at 8: "Who Cares?," "In the Night," and "Jazz (Six Syncopated Movements)." . . ¶ May 9 at 8: "The Goldberg Variations" and "West Side Story Suite." . . ¶ May 10 at 8: "The Chairman Dances," "Dvořák Bagatelles," "Agon," and "Jazz (Six Syncopated Movements)." . . ¶ May 11 at 2: "Symphony in C," "Symphony in Three Movements," and "West Side Story Suite." . . ¶ May 11 at 8: "Reliquary," "Calcium Light Night," "In the Night," and "Who Cares?" . . ¶ May 12 at 3: "Calcium Light Night," "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," "Barber Violin Concerto," and "West Side Story Suite." . . ¶ May 14 at 8: "Correlazione," "In G Major," and "Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through June 30.)

American Ballet Theatre—May 8 and May 11 at 2 and 8, and May 9-10 at 8: "Swan Lake." . . ¶ May 13 at 8: "Manon." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. Through June 22.)

Maya Plisetskaya Gala—The Bolshoi's prima ballerina celebrates her seventieth birthday, with Vladimir Malakhov of A.B.T., Nichol Hlinka and Damian Woetzel of N.Y.C.B., Benjamin Pech of the Paris Opera Ballet, Zhanna Ayupova and Alexander Kurkov of the Kirov, et al., in excerpts from Fokine, Petipa, Balanchine, Béjart—you get the picture. Plisetskaya will appear as well, still on pointe, in "The Dying Swan." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. May 10-11 at 8 and May 12 at 3.)

Garth Fagan Dance—The thirteen-member troupe performs selections of its founder's choreography from the seventies through the present. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. May 8-10 at 8, May 11 at 2 and 8, and May 12 at 2 and 7:30.)

"Blow Molding"—The saxophonist-dancer-choreographer-director Dan Froot is known to many in the dance world as the great collaborator: he has graced the work of Dan Hurlin, Victoria Marks, and David Dorfman with his calm intelligence, rhythmic chops, and deadpan impishness. Though four of the five pieces on this program are collaborations (including one with Dorfman), the evening's final work is a solo about openness and vulnerability which Froot will perform naked—at least that was his intention at press time. "It's scary, really scary. I've been showing it in rehearsals lately," Froot says. "And it's even hard in front of friends." (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. May 9-12 at 9. Through May 19.)

"V.O.I.D."—The Dutch choreographer Pauline de Groot has invited four guest artists, one for each evening of the engagement, to disrupt the performances of her Amsterdam-based company as they dance in "V.O.I.D. (Velocity of Interfering Data)." (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. May 9-12 at 8:30.)

"Quilombos"—DanceBrazil presents the story of Quilombo dos Palmares, a city-state of runaway slaves, to mark the tricentennial of the death of Zumbi, an Angolan prince who died defending the community from Dutch attack. (Hostos Center for the Arts, Grand Concourse at 149th St., the Bronx. 1-718 518-4455. May 9 at 7:30)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Dorothy Donegan—Now in her seventies, Donegan can still scare the pants off you with her wild, free-association piano discourses. She'll try anything, even the impossible, interpolating classical themes into Tin Pan Alley, slinging off Tatum volleys, romping through stride passages when the spirit moves her. It's on-the-edge stuff. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. May 9 at 8.)

Cassandra Wilson—Endowed with a voice like poured honey, she first came to prominence as the featured chanteuse on "Motherland Pulse," a 1985 release by alto saxophonist Steve Coleman. An ambitious series of solo efforts followed, beginning in 1986 with "Point of View" and reaching its peak with the 1990 sci-fi extravaganza "Jumpworld." Despite the strength of these records, by "After the Beginning Again" (1992), it was obvious that she needed to explore new avenues. She found them in the folksy jazz of her 1993 Blue Note début, "Blue Light till Dawn." The change in direction was no surprise, but the number of cover tunes (eight in all, including material by Joni Mitchell and Robert Johnson) was. The quality of "Blue Light," though, couldn't dissipate the growing fear that Wilson was being relegated to remakesville. "New Moon Daughter," her latest effort, ably puts that concern to rest—even though seven of the twelve songs are in fact remakes. The tone of the album is unmistakably cohesive; classics like "Strange Fruit" and "Skylark" have been stripped down to bluesy skeletons and anchored by acoustic guitar. "New Moon" conjures up images of the Southern woods, and Wilson sings with a cool fire straight from the back porch. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. May 10 at 8.)

Cassandra Wilson, at Town Hall.

Johnny Mathis / Roberta Flack—Two pop balladeers, two sumptuous voices, two slightly different vintages. Although in a few instances he's veered toward semi-jazz, Mathis has for the most part been so besotted with pretty feelings and adolescent angst that he verges on the numbing. Flack is even more frustrating: she possessed one of the most beautiful voices of her generation, her diction and phrasing perfect and her approach direct and heartfelt, but in the seventies her predilection for schmaltz easy-listened her into a corner. Still, they're musical history, and they just might surprise us. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. May 10-12 at 8.)

"Duke in Hollywood"—Investigating Duke Ellington's gargantuan output could keep anyone busy through the next millennium. For their final concert of the season, the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra takes on a few of his exceptional film and TV scores. The music from "Anatomy of a Murder" (1959) has long been a favorite of Ellington aficionados. (Who can forget the film's four-hand romp, with James Stewart and the Duke sharing a keyboard?) The program also includes "Old Man Blues" (1930), "Symphony in Black" (1935), and "Asphalt Jungle Suite" (1962), the latter adapted from Ellington's music for the hit TV series. But the real gem of the evening should be the live première of "The Degas Suite," from an unfinished 1968 documentary about horse racing. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. May 11 at 8.)

Allison Krauss and Union Station—In 1993, Krauss made an album with the Cox Family, a Louisiana-based gospel quintet, and the result was sweet heartland harmony—a high, unlonesome sound familiar to fans of her recordings with Union Station, her own bluegrass band. She can be uneven in performance, but her voice is one of the great pleasures of the nineties, and she's worth seeking out. (Town Hall. May 11 at 8.)

World Music Festival—Two days of global pop, with the Irish rock band Black 47, the Brazilian samba outfit PeDeBoi, and the Moroccan singer, dancer, and sintir player Hassan Hakmoun. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. May 11 at 3 and May 12 at 1.)

Tori Amos—One of pop's more eccentric performers, this classically trained piano prodigy turned spandex vixen débuted in 1991 with "Little Earthquakes," a critically acclaimed mixture of baroque keyboard work and oozing sexuality. On the cover of her latest record, "Boys for Pele" (dedicated to a volcano goddess who swallows men whole), she's pictured breast-feeding a pig. Onstage, as on disk, she may be over the top, but she's rarely a bore. (The Theatre at Madison Square Garden. 465-6741. May 13-14 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—A West Coast sensation, vocalist **WESLIA WHITFIELD** has the poise, the diction, and the taste of a budding Mabel Mercer. Her program ranges over the standards, which she imbues with delicate swing and knowing wit. She appears in the Oak Room through May 11. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through May 12: trumpeter **MAYNARD FERGUSON AND BIG BOP NOUVEAU.** See Maynard trot out his umpteenth band. Hear him hit notes best appreciated by Labradors. Watch as he pulls in tourists. Give him points for consistency, though—he knows what they want and he gives it to them every time. The ever-tasteful **KENNY BURRELL** (starting May 14) isn't the most galvanic of guitarists, but there's always been enough dirt under his nails to inject even the most careful runs with the sweet funk of the blues. His band, the All Stars, is a mélange of the recognized and the overlooked. Familiar names include the celebrated pianist Sir Roland Hanna, *über*-bassist Ray Drummond, trombonist Steve Turre, and vocalist Vanessa Rubin; the lesser-sung are trumpeter Jimmy Owens, a bright light of the seventies and the eighties, and reedman Jerome Richardson, a perennial who always merits closer listening. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—After twenty-nine years at the Café Carlyle, **BOBBY SHORT** is polished to such a high gloss that he's almost blinding to behold. Everything he does is breathlessly paced: tempos accelerate, notes ascend, hands clap, teeth

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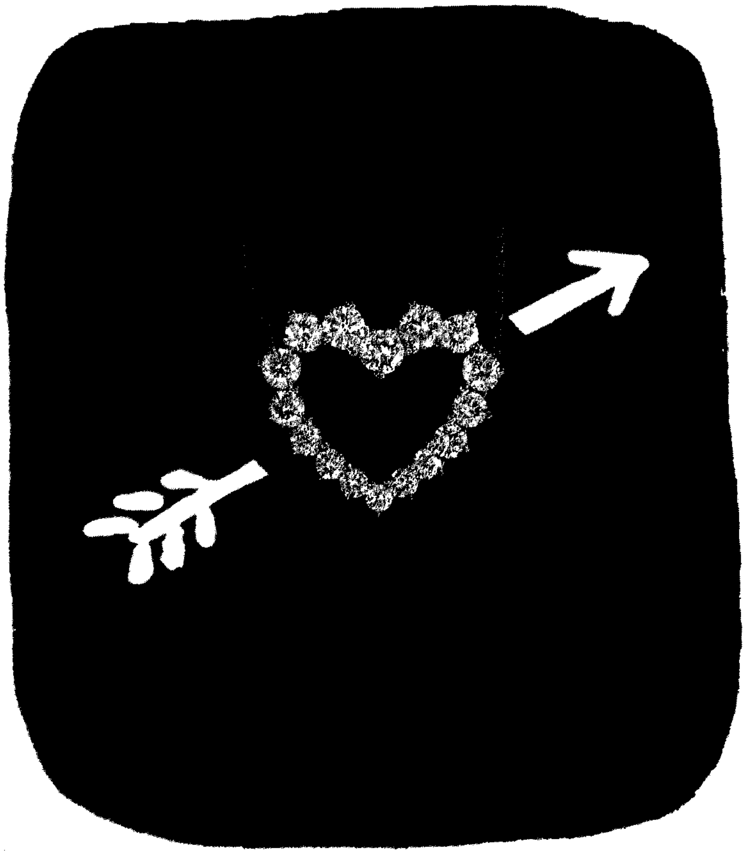

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flash. His speech has the arcane ring that comes from travelling in glamorous circles: "You're a knockout!" "What an audience!" "How chic!" "Wow!" Just as your attention begins to flag, he shifts gears and does ten minutes of blues with cheeky conviction. But all his mannerisms really come into focus the minute he sings Cole Porter, which turns everything else into a warmup.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—May 10: The **DAVE DOUGLAS** quintet. The first-call trumpeter for downtown projects of all bents, Douglas is one of the brightest lights on the avant-jazz scene—he's got the vision, the wit, and the anything-goes spirit that's missing from most of today's straitlaced pups. The **MINGUS BIG BAND,** a fourteen-piece ensemble that concentrates exclusively on the tricky, cacophonous work of its inspiration, the late Charles Mingus, still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Fifty Seven Fifty Seven, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A sleek piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel. Dining.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through May 12: the **RANDY BRECKER** band. It's hard to forgive and forget the seventies fusoid funk scourge that was the Brecker Brothers, but this brother was a smart, vibrant trumpeter before that stain on his résumé. He remains one of the best players of his generation. **LES PAUL** owns the joint every Monday. Dining.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—The great cabaret in the sky. **ANTHONY NEWLEY** is the current star in residence. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra. Closed Mondays.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through May 12: the **RON CARTER** quintet. As long as Carter sticks to his regular instrument, the full-size acoustic bass, then all is well; when he turns to his mutant piccolo bass, we're in trouble. In his early-sixties work with Miles Davis and in his ubiquitous presence both in the studio and onstage ever since, Carter has practically defined the role of the bass in modern jazz. Apparently that doesn't satisfy him: for his own gigs, he often concentrates on his shrunken, cello-like aberration. He may be the world's greatest piccolo bassist, but the instrument's stretched-rubber-band tone and its limited expressiveness make that a dubious achievement. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Visiones, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—May 8-11: The **MOSE ALLISON** trio. Allison is still making the world safe for pissed-off musical anomalies over sixty. Slamming the piano like Jimmy Yancey possessed by Monk and Bartók, he's nothing less than a national treasure.

ROCK, ETC.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—May 9: The **KENNEDYS.** This D.C.-based husband-and-wife team spent several years playing in Nanci Griffith's band before releasing their own shimmering début, "River of Fallen Stars," in 1995. Their terrific new album, "Life Is Large," features guest appearances by Roger McGuinn, Steve Earle, and Nils Lofgren. They're the best-kept secret in folk rock. With the Nields. May 14: **ROBERT EARL KEEN.** Like his fellow Texans Steve Earle and Jimmie Dale Gilmore, this fine singer-songwriter packs a lot of hard-earned wisdom into his disarming tales of life on the road—and he has a cult following to show for it. His recent studio album, "Gringo Honeymoon," is both harrowing and hilarious—country music the way it ought to be.

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—May 8: **FRED SCHNEIDER.** As the front man for the B-52's, Schneider has long been exporting the dorky chic of Athens, Georgia, to the rest of the world. His winning adenoidal monotone and Frankenstein-monster elegance have helped keep the B-52's out of the novelty bins and in the international limelight. A few years ago, he had a solo hit called "Monster" ("There's a monster in my pants / and it does a naughty dance") and he's back again, without the mother ship, to support "Just Fred," his new solo effort.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—May 10-11: **OTIS RUSH.** Some bluesmen are nothing more than hollow collections of pat phrases and rictal poses, but Rush is the real deal: his sandpaper voice and the groaning simplicity of his guitar transcend all manner of pain and suffering. An essential experience.

Continental Divide, 25 Third Ave., at St. Marks Pl. (529-6924)—Hipsters, punks, poseurs, N.Y.U. students, the occasional skinhead—a typical East Village bar. Live music nightly.

Don Hill's, 511 Greenwich St. (219-2850)—A tidy little SoHo bar with an above-average P.A. system and topnotch local bands on the docket. Friday night is SqueezeBox, a drag-queen-ridden glam-rock romp, hosted by Misstress Formika, which has become New York's sexiest little party. Go-go girls and boys pole-dance on the overcrowded bar; the guest performers are always fun, often sleazy, and, sometimes, surprisingly good—Sherry Vine, Debbie Harry, and members of Hole have all graced the stage. Show up late in your best metallic-blue eyeshadow.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—May 14: The excellent up-and-coming folk singer **PATTY GRIFFIN.**

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—May 9: **SON VOLT.** Reborn from the same ashes that gave us Wilco, Son Volt features the raggedy guitars, stark acoustic plucking, and cut-to-the-bone tales that make its début album, "Trace," a down-and-out vision. May 11: From Good Homes. May 14: **YOKO ONO.** On "Rising," her powerful recent disk, Ono gives voice to a host of repressed emotions that have been brewing since the death of John Lennon. Her liner notes, which draw parallels between her childhood in Japan during the Second World War and her current life in AIDS-ravaged New York, are among the most eloquent prose you'll find in a rock album. And the instrumentals—reggae-tinged funk, howling punk, and suffocating pop, provided by Sean Lennon and his band, IMA—create a cathartic backdrop for her vocal fireworks, while the chemistry between mother and son makes this album her finest work since the days of the Plastic Ono Band. Though she's been demonized for decades, she's as cool and daring as she ever was; maybe now we're finally catching up with her. . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday. The dancers share a passion for the Lindy Hop, a dance that involves a lot of whirling and the occasional display of underwear. Sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—May 12: The **GRIFTERS.** Their recent effort, "Ain't My Lookout," is a pleasurable jolt of fractured songwriting, swamp-bucket rhythms, and the occasional backwards guitar—in other words, everything you'd expect from a slacker-rock band; these guys from Memphis just do it better than everybody else. **FRED SCHNEIDER** swings over from Brownies on May 13.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—May 8: **WILLIE NILE.** At the dawn of the eighties, this singer-songwriter, a wee dynamo in the Dylansteen mold, was opening stadium shows for The Who at Pete Townshend's request. Legal tangles drove his career off track, but not—as his periodic resurfacings keep demonstrating—his talent.

Rodeo Bar, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—The walls simulate a log cabin, smoke blows through the nostrils of a buffalo head, a horse trailer has been converted into a bar, and you get peanuts for eating and, sometimes, throwing.

Supper Club, 240 W. 47th St. (921-1940)—May 9: **SOPHIE B. HAWKINS.** A few years back, Hawkins' début album featured a pouty hip-hop number called "Damn, I Wish I Was Your Lover." It seemed like the start of a stellar career. In the great Madonna tradition, she posed provocatively for the press (a topless spread in *Interview*) and talked a lot about sex. Her follow-up record, a creditable piece of work called "Whaler," seems to have suffered from what is commonly referred to as the sophomore jinx: no one heard it and it bombed. Still, she is an interesting performer—sort of a cross between Stevie Nicks and the artist formerly known as Prince—and she should be in good form in this intimate room. May 14: The whipped-cream-smooth sounds of **HERB ALPERT.**

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—May 9: **MERLE HAGGARD.** A rare club performance (postponed from an earlier date) by the grizzled, ornery master of drivin', drinkin', and thinkin' songs. With the near-simultaneous release of a handsome four-CD box, "Down Every Road," and an excellent new album, "1996," the singer's claim to a place in the country pantheon is secure. The numerous photographs in the boxed set remind you that the young Haggard had killer-diller good looks; the songs on the new record reassure you that the bard of Bakersfield is still alive and kicking.

Webster Hall, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. Wednesday is drag night. Psychedelic Thursdays feature grunge acts and cheap beer.

ONLY CONNECT

Web Sightings

The Netizen (http://www.hotwired.com/netizen)—This political "channel" on the vast *Hotwired* site is enjoyable enough simply for not suffering politicians gladly; as a bonus, it doesn't suffer the people who write about them gladly, either. "So many reporters, so little content" is how the editors characterize the media's coverage of everything from the Presidential primaries to the Menendez brothers' trials. The Netizen does not stop to reload.

Updated daily (sometimes twice daily), The Netizen does a better job of covering the morphing world of politics than most of its print and television counterparts. Here you can find dispatches from flamers, ranters, and muckrakers who get the facts straight, as well as plenty of opportunities to interact: daily opinion polls, on everything from Bob Dole's habit of referring to himself in the third person to the virtues of chunky peanut butter versus smooth, and Threads, a bulletin board that offers users the opportunity to take issue (sometimes forcefully) with "Media Rant" columnist Jon Katz. The design is clean and easy to navigate, with links in the margins to archived stories and to other political sites. (The Netizen knows a good link when it sees one: Rebecca Vesely's eye-opening April 24 piece on the militia movement's use of the Internet connected you to such right-wing outfits as the John Birch Society and the Patriots Against the New World Order.)

The Netizen's editor, David Weir, a cofounder of the Center for Investigative Reporting in San Francisco, calls his Web page "a daily broadsheet, a radio station, an experiment." With its immediate access (digital photos from the Buchanan campaign were uploaded shortly after they were taken) and innovative use of sound (by clicking a "Noise" button you can download interviews—not sound bites but long, coherent passages that put the speaker's quotations in context and continue to run while you surf), The Netizen offers a good glimpse of a new medium in its infancy. Blink and you'll miss it.

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ART

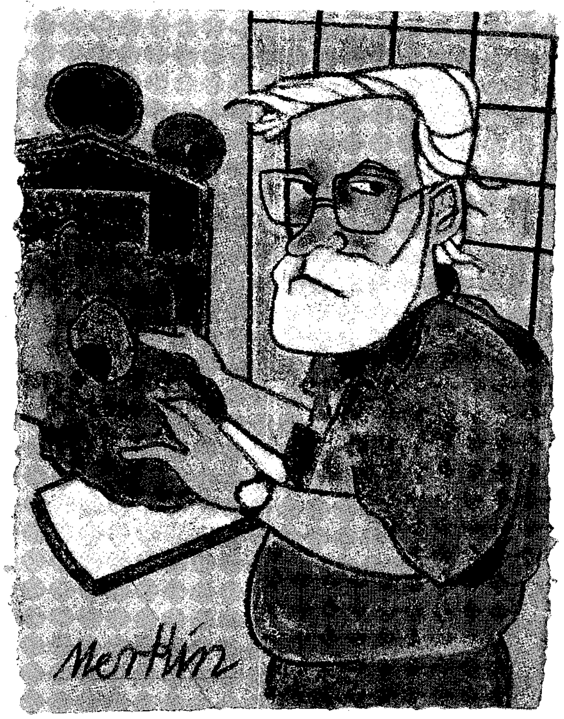
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Splendors of Imperial China." There has been a little revolution at this major exhibition of treasures from the National Palace Museum, in Taipei, which was too large to display all at once: all of the paintings have been replaced and many of the calligraphic scrolls unrolled to different sections of their texts. Among the newly exhibited works are an exquisitely symmetrical silk tapestry of the Buddha in a pose of meditation and a high-spirited fourteenth-century silk painting of frolicking gibbons. Tu Chin's large scroll painting "Enjoying Antiquities" deliciously depicts a connoisseur flaunting his collection of bibelots to a salivating rival. New Yorkers' opportunity to salivate ends May 19. . . . ¶ "Genoa: Drawings and Prints 1530-1800." The spectacular works of the Roman Baroque have always stolen the spotlight from what was going on in the sticks; this well-curated exhibition of prints and drawings from the Republic of Genoa turns up some lesser-known masters who are by no means second-rate. While the works of Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione frequently displayed the influence of his contemporaries Rembrandt and Poussin, he was nonetheless a highly original artist. His oil-on-paper "Youth Playing a Pipe for a Satyr" is an exuberant fantasy, embodying the electric attraction-opposition of the Dionysian and the Apollonian in the Italian imagination. His white-on-black monotypes boldly prefigure Romanticism: "God Creating Adam" steals from Michelangelo but seems to resound with Blake. Through July 7. . . . ¶ Among the designers represented at the Costume Institute in "Bare Witness: Clothing and Nudity," a history of concealment and exposure in fashion from the eighteenth century on, are Madame Grès, Halston, Gianni Versace, Rudi Gernreich, and Mary Quant. Through Aug. 18. . . . ¶ "Making Music: Two Centuries of Musical Instrument Making in New York" includes everything from recorders to steel drums to a theremin. Through July 28. . . . ¶ "Picturing Paradise: Colonial Photography of Samoa, 1875-1925." Through Aug. 4. . . . NOTE: The museum's roof garden is open (weather permiting), with sculptures by Rodin, Lachaise, Lipchitz, Caro, Smith (David), and Smith (Tony). (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Picasso and Portraiture: Representation and Transformation" includes a hundred and thirty paintings, and nearly as many works on paper, depicting lovers, wives, poets, art dealers, and children. . . . ¶ "Come Sunday: Photographs by Thomas Roma." Strikingly candid black-and-white pictures of African-American parishioners deep in prayer in Brooklyn churches. Through June 18. . . . ¶ Three video works by Hirsch Perlman, with photographs and text, are in the "Projects" space. Through May 21. . . . ¶ "Deformations: Aspects of the Modern Grotesque" features works in many mediums by such artists as Francis Bacon, Cindy Sherman, James Ensor, Philip Guston, and Eva Hesse. Through May 21. . . . ¶ A recently acquired dark-blue example of the 1963 Jaguar E-type is on view. Through Aug. 20. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Abstraction in the Twentieth Century: Total Risk, Freedom, Discipline." Part of the show remains on view through May 12. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—A retrospective of a hundred assemblages, constructed from scavenged street and flea-market materials, by Edward Kienholz (1927-94) and Nancy Reddin Kienholz. Through June 2. . . . ¶ "An American Story," a chronological survey of twentieth-century painting and sculpture, both well-known and obscure, from the museum's collection. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)



Ken Price, at Parrasch.

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"Converging Cultures: Art & Identity in Spanish America." An intelligently curated, wonderfully intriguing exhibition of Latin American art from the sixteenth century through the early twentieth, focussing on the interpenetrations of native and colonial cultures. Most of the three hundred often awkward but also beautiful and even noble objects—paintings, textiles, silverware, furniture, religious articles—have been gathered from the museum's collection; they attest to the uneasy yet surprisingly successful accommodation that artists in the viceroyalties of Peru and New Spain made with European styles and motifs. Through July 14. . . . ¶ "The Art of Thomas Wilmer Dewing: Beauty Reconfigured." "Drooping Dewing," as he has been called, was famous in the late nineteenth century for his wan figures and vapory, narcotic landscapes. On the evidence of the beautiful canvases in this exhibition, his eclipse was undeserved. Many of Dewing's means and motifs are American counterparts of late-Romantic and Symbolist devices; Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Puvis de Chavannes, and Khnopff all come to mind in these galleries of aimless, melancholy women. The atmosphere—rich, indolent, stifling—simmers with unfocussed but potentially rebellious emotion and eroticism. Through June 9. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—"The Art of Peter Voulkos." Sculptures from the late fifties to the present by the influential ceramist. Through June 9. . . . ¶ "Form-Light-Glass: Contemporary Glass from the Czech Republic" features seven large sculptures by glass artists Stanislav Libenský and Jaroslava Brychtová, Václav Cigler, Marian Karel, Vladimír Kopecký, and Dana Zámečniková. Through June 9. . . . ¶ A display of kaleidoscopic glass mosaics from the past twenty years by Klaus Moje. Through June 9. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.—"Hare's Fur, Tortoiseshell, and Partridge Feathers: Chinese Brown- and Black-Glazed Ceramics, 400-1400." Through July 6. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St.—"Soane: Connoisseur & Collector," fifty architectural drawings from Sir John Soane's Museum, in London, including sheets by Piranesi, Wren, William Chambers, Joseph Michael Gandy, and Robert Adam. Through July 7. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Museo del Barrio, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. Alicia D'Amico, Mario Cravo Neto, Luis Gonzalez Palma, and Flor Garduño are among the artists in "Image and Memory: Latin American Photography, 1880-1992." Through June 16. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—Seven sculptures by Rodin are on view, from the collection of Iris and B. Gerald Cantor. Through May 19. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5; Friday evenings until 8, with no admission charge after 5.)

New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W.—"Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and Their New York, 1897-1917" an exhibit of paintings and works on paper by six of The Eight: Robert Henri, John Sloan, Everett Shinn, William Glackens, George Bellows, and George Luks. Through Aug. 4. . . . ¶ "New York Then and Now: The Upper West Side," an exhibit of archival survey photographs from 1880 to 1930, alongside views of the same locations today. Through May 19. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Sue Coe—If there's no passion left in most art these days, maybe it's because this British-born black hole of anger has sucked it all up. Coe grew up a block from a hog slaughterhouse, and she loathes the meat industry with a corrosive, honorable hatred that keeps her paintings at a permanently white-hot pitch. Her themes go further afield; practically every known form of degradation shows up in her grim, paranoid paintings, with titles such as "Heroin Addict Kneeling by Urinal" and "Nellie the Elephant Says Good-Bye to the Circus and Is Shot 87 Times." Coe can let her self-righteous indignation get the better of her, but often the more excessively she overtops herself, the better the work. Through May 24. (Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St.)

David Hockney—Two shows, a couple of floors apart. At Robert Miller: paintings and photographs of paintings, the latter made with a large-format camera. At Emmerich: small paintings and "Snails Space," a large-scale "painting as performance" whose fanciful landscape extends onto the floor around it; the whole environment is lit with six theatre lights on a nine-minute cycle of changing colors, which interact with the varied pigments and bring the painting to life. Both shows through June 15. (41 E. 57th St.)

Clifford Odets (1906-63)—"In Hell + Why," a group of rarely viewed paintings on paper, made during the playwright's bouts of insomnia and procrastination. Through June 8. (Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St.)

Ken Price—"Geometric Works, 1972-83," a survey of ceramic cups and vases. Through May 11. (Parrasch, 20 W. 57th St.)

Picasso^3—A Pablo troika, riding the coattails of the portrait exhibition at MOMA. At Gagosian (980 Madison Ave., at 76th St.): Oil portraits from 1920 to 1970. Through June 29. . . . At Yoshii (20 W. 57th St.):

RICHARD MERKIN

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"Academic and Anti-Academic," twenty paintings and drawings done in Barcelona between 1895 and 1900, including "Sketch for Science and Charity" (1897). Through June 15. . . . At Krugier (41 E. 57th St.): Works in several mediums from the fifties and sixties, along with photographs of the artist by David Douglas Duncan. Through June 30.

GROUP SHOWS—At WASHBURN, 20 W. 57th St.: Paintings, sculptures, and works on paper by Ronald Bladen, James Brooks, Hans Hofmann, Elaine and Willem de Kooning, David Smith, and Jack Youngerman. Through May 18. . . . MB MODERN, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.: A new gallery, temporarily occupying the back room at Babcock, offers strong work that revisits some standard modernist themes with the beady eye of our postmodernist fin de siècle. Bruno Andrade's brash, unlovely still-lifes echo the decorative interiors of the mature Matisse in flat blacks and poisonous pastels; Michael Lathrop's faux-naïve landscapes, rendered in glistening, intensely colored impasto, suggest Van Gogh's obsessive vision of nature. Through May 17.

SHORT LIST—ROSS BLECKNER, Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through June 29. . . . KEN BUHLER, O'Hara, 41 E. 57th St. Through June 1. . . . FRITZ BULTMAN, Schlesinger, 24 E. 73rd St. Through May 18. . . . CHARLES BURCHFIELD, Kennedy, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through June 1. . . . JOHN CHAMBERLAIN, Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. Through June 8. . . . WILLEM DE KOONING, C & M Arts, 45 E. 78th St. Through June 1. . . . FRED DEUX, Cadé, 1045 Madison Ave., at 79th St. Through May 31. . . . RICHARD DIEBENKORN, Acquavella, 18 E. 79th St. Open Mondays; through May 23. . . . KATHARINA FRITSCH, Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St. Through June 8. . . . GREGORY GILLESPIE, Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St., and Kind, 136 Greene St. Both shows through June 7. . . . PER KIRKEBY, Werner, 21 E. 67th St. Open Mondays; through June 28. . . . WIFREDO LAM, Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. Through June 15. . . . LIKA MUTAL, Haime, 41 E. 57th St. Open Mondays; through May 31. . . . JOHN NEWMAN, McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. Open Mondays; through May 18. . . . JOHN OPPER, DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through May 31. . . . WILLIAM TUCKER, McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through May 25.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

LOUISE BOURGEOIS—A retrospective of a hundred abstract and figurative drawings, beginning with a self-portrait from 1938 (the year she came to New York from Paris) and continuing to the present. Through June 8. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. Open Wednesday evenings until 8.)

RACHEL WHITEREAD—New sculptures made by using everyday objects—bathtubs, tables, bookshelves (a new departure)—as molds for negative-space castings in plaster, rubber, or resin. Through June 18. (Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St. See also Talks in Above and Beyond.)

ROB WYNNE—"Sleepwalking," an ambitious installation of mixed-medium pieces employing patterned wallpapers, photographs, and computer-generated "embroideries." Wynne invokes grand themes—the transience of beauty, the transformative powers of aesthetic experience—with considerable aplomb. Through May 11. (Holly Solomon, 172 Mercer St.)

"IN QUEST OF THE ABSOLUTE"—Ten paintings by twentieth-century artists who have pursued spiritual paths, among them Malevich, Mondrian, Rothko, Reinhardt, Martin, and Ryman. Through June 8. (Blum, 99 Wooster St.)

NEW YORK STUDIO SCHOOL—An alumni exhibition, curated by critic Michael Brenson, of sculptures by, among others, Jene Highstein, Kazumi Tanaka, Sally Tittmann, and Mayumi Sarai. Through May 18. (8 W. 8th St. Open Mondays; closes at 4 on Saturdays.)

SHORT LIST—MARY BEYT, Morris Healy, 530 W. 22nd St. Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6; through June 2. . . . ASHLEY BICKERTON, Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway. Through June 1. . . . PAUL BLOODGOOD, 303 Gallery, 89 Greene St. Through May 18. . . . SCOTT BURTON, Protetch, 560 Broadway. Through June 1. . . . SQUEAK CARNWATH, Beitzel, 102 Prince St. Through June 15. . . . MICHAEL RAY CHARLES, Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. Through May 25. . . . JUDY FOX and BO BARTLETT, P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway. Through May 25. . . . HAMISH FULTON, Weber, 142 Greene St. Through May 18. . . . ANN HAMILTON, Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. Through May 31. . . . JAN HENLE, Wooster Gardens, 558 Broadway. Through June 1. . . . DAMIEN HIRST, Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. Through June 15. . . . ROSALYN JACOBS, Synchronicity Space, 55 Mercer St. Through June 1. . . . MICHAEL JOO, Nordanstad, 289 Hudson St., at Spring St. Opens at 1; through May 25. . . . ILYA KABAKOV, Westreich, 114 Greene St. Through May 25. . . . STEVE KEISTER, Maynes, 225 Lafayette St. Through May 18. . . . YAYOI KUSAMA, Cooper, 155 Wooster St. Through June 21. . . . PEPON OSORIO, Feldman, 31 Mercer St. Through June 1. . . . TONY OURSLER, Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St. Through May 25. . . . DAN PETERMAN, Rosen, 130 Prince St. Through May 18. . . . JAMES ROSENQUIST, Castelli, 420 West Broadway. Through May 18.

OTHER VENUES

"JIM HENSON: DESIGNS AND DOODLES"—Drawings, designs, and handmade puppets by the creator of the Muppets, including Pierre, the earliest existing Henson puppet, and the original Kermit. Through May 18. (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. Open Mondays, and Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5; Tuesdays, 2:30 to 5.)

"BICYCLES: HISTORY, BEAUTY, FANTASY"—An appreciation of the bike's evolution from 1817 to 1920, including examples of the Phantom velocipede (the first bicycle with a rubber tire), the Ariel (the first manufactured high-wheeler), and the Old Hickory Ladies' Model (made from sixteen plies of laminated second-growth hickory). Through Oct. 4. (PaineWebber Building, Sixth Ave. at 52nd St. Open Mondays through Fridays, 8 to 6.)

VISIONS OF VISION

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The goals of scientific research are set by inspired visions. Some of the most stimulating are visions about vision. ❧ In research centers around the world, the focus on vision opens new paths to medical progress and economic abundance. It engages brilliant minds across a spectrum of diverse scientific disciplines. ❧ At the Weizmann Institute where multi-disciplinary research flourishes in Israel, vision-related studies challenge the imaginations of many scientists. Some laboratory projects address the eye itself, such as the demonstration of regenerative growth in injured optic nerves and the use of an enzyme to treat glaucoma without surgery. Other vision-oriented research occurs at the exciting intersection of brain research and mathematics. Discoveries in neurobiology point the way to revolutionary new robotic devices: intelligent systems designed to recognize and understand what they "see." Computer scientists analyzing vision data hope to generate models leading to spectacularly more sophisticated prosthetic devices and infinitely more efficient tools for industrial and agricultural development. ❧ Wherever research scientists pursue visions of progress, they deserve enthusiastic support from public and private sources.

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AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Sotheby's—May 8: Tribal art. . . . ¶ May 8-9: A much anticipated sale of contemporary art, including major works by de Kooning, Gorky, Kline, and Johns. . . . ¶ May 11: Fine and collectible wines. . . . ¶ May 14: Pre-Columbian art. . . . ¶ May 14-15: Latin American works, with especially notable offerings by Mexican modernists (Frida Kahlo, Leonora Carrington) and works by Tamayo, Rivera, and Wifredo Lam. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

Christie's—May 8: The conclusion of a contemporary-art sale features important canvases (by Hockney, Clemente, Warhol, and many others) from the collection of the late Henry Geldzahler. . . . ¶ May 9: Tribal art. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.) . . . ¶ At Christie's East: Bidders may hope to score an eagle, or at least a birdie, at an auction of golf memorabilia. (219 E. 67th St. May 14.)

Doyle's—May 8 at 10: Books, maps, and autographs, including a large collection of music autographs and correspondence relating to George Gershwin. . . . At noon: Old Master, modern, and contemporary prints. . . . At 7: Furniture and decorative arts in the Arts and Crafts style, principally from the stock of the recently closed Michael Carey Gallery. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.)

Swann's—An auction of maps and atlases, decorative graphics, and ephemera. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710. May 9 at 10:30 and 2.)

Phillips—This auction house, which has kept a low profile in town for the past several years, has begun to reinvigorate its New York presence. On May 9, it will oversee a sale of Judaica—art works as well as books. (406 E. 79th St. 570-4830.)

International Fine Art Fair—The third annual installment of this show brings together seventy American and European dealers of paintings, sculptures, and drawings. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. May 10-15. For information, call 382-0969.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

William Klein—An exhibit of previously unpublished pictures from "New York 1954.55," a reëdited and redesigned version of the photographer's 1956 book, "Life Is Good and Good for You in New York." Through May 11. (Greenberg and Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St.)

Marcus Leatherdale—Selections from "Bharat—India," a series of sepia-toned portraits of a cross-section of India: circus performers, village elders, actors, dancers, ranis, and maharajas. Through May 24. (Bridgewater/Lustberg, 560 Broadway.)

Helen Levitt / Reagan Louie—Rare prints from the artist's 1941 trip to Mexico, newly discovered photographs from New York in the thirties and forties, and color work from the seventies to the present. / "Asians and Pacific Islanders," a series of multipanel color works in which the artist explores issues of cultural identity. Both shows through May 23. (Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St.)

Irving Penn—Portraits and still-lifes from throughout the artist's career, including twenty-three silver, platinum, and Cibachrome prints not shown before and recent experimental works. Through May 11. (Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St.)

Alexander Rodchenko (1891-1956)—Vintage prints from the twenties and thirties, including portraits, architectural studies, and pictures of sports events and circus performers. Through May 31. (Karg, 100 Greene St.)

"France: New Visions"—Contemporary work by such artists as Jeanloup Sieff, Dolorès Marat, Pierre et Gilles, Raymond Depardon, Sarah Moon, and Keiichi Tahara. Through May 18. (Burden, 20 E. 23rd St.)

"Chicago Photography, 1935-1965"—Pictures by thirty artists who worked and taught there, including experimental works by Moholy-Nagy and Kepes, abstractions by Siskind and Metzker, beachgoers by Yasuhiro Ishimoto, and kids at play by Art Shay. Through May 31. (Danziger, 130 Prince St.)

"Johnson with Snowball—Rayman Circus/Berhampur," by Marcus Leatherdale, at Bridgewater/Lustberg.

Short List—**AMY ADLER**, Kaplan, 580 Broadway. Through May 25. . . . **RON AGAM**, Tweed, 52 Chambers St. Open Mondays through Fridays, 9 to 5; through May 17. . . . **SUSANNA BRISELLI** and **MARGARETTA K. MITCHELL**, Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Through May 25. . . . **ANDREW BUSH**, Saul, 560 Broadway. Through June 1. . . . **BARBARA ESS**, Marcus, 578 Broadway. Through May 25. . . . **GERARD FIERET**, Mann, 42 E. 76th St. Through June 29. . . . **HORST** and **ANSEL ADAMS**, International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; both shows through June 2. . . . **HERBERT LIST**, Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. Through June 15. . . . **DANNY LYON** and **SUSAN FENTON**, Lowinsky, 578 Broadway. Through June 29. . . . **INGE MORATH**, Leica, 670 Broadway. Opens Saturdays at noon; through June 12. . . . **BASTIENNE SCHMIDT**, Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. Through May 18. . . . **LOUIS STETTNER**, Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. Through June 1. . . . **JOSEF SUDEK**, International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; through July 7. . . . **ARTHUR TRESS**, Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. Through May 11.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, El Museo del Barrio, and the New-York Historical Society.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall is 247-7800, and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 501-3330.)

OPERA

Opera Orchestra of New York—Presenting Verdi's "Giovanna d'Arco," in a concert version directed by Eve Queler and featuring soprano June Anderson, tenor Gegam Grigorian, and baritone Carlo Guelfi. (Carnegie Hall. May 8 at 8.)

La Gran Scena—The company concludes another season of operatic parodies. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. May 10 at 8 and May 11 at 7:30.)

Amato Opera Company—Final performances of "Un Ballo in Maschera." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. May 11 at 7:30 and May 12 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—At the age when most composers hope to start breaking through to real success, Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957) watched his sparkling career begin to fade. As a brilliant prodigy, he had seen his music championed—and heard it performed, repeatedly, while he was still a teenager—by such artists as the conductor Felix Weingartner, the pianist and conductor Bruno Walter, the pianist Artur Schnabel, and the violinist Arnold Rosé. He spent much of the nineteen-thirties and -forties in Hollywood; but, while achieving acclaim as one of the all-time-best film composers, he lost his prestige in the classical-music community. Late in life, Korngold again turned his energies toward concert music, composing concertos for cello and for violin and three additional large orchestral works, including his only symphony (completed in 1952). Although Jascha Heifetz championed the Violin Concerto, the composer died long before his reputation was restored. But in the past half-dozen years, his concert music—orchestral, chamber, and vocal—has gained a new following; after years of neglect, the Symphony can suddenly be heard in three recorded versions (with a fourth on the way), and it figures for the first time this season on the programs of the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Philharmonic. In this concert, André Previn conducts Korngold's Symphony, as well as Ravel's "Le Tombeau de Couperin" and G-Major Piano Concerto (featuring Mitsuko Uchida). (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. May 9 and May 11 at 8; May 10 at 2; and May 14 at 7:30.)

"A German Requiem"—Brahms's sacred masterpiece gets two simultaneous go-rounds on May 9 at 8. At Carnegie Hall: The Oratorio Society of New York, directed by Lyndon Woodside; also on the bill is Nicolas Flagello's "The Passion of Martin Luther King." Soprano Jayne West, baritone Robert Perry, and bass Kevin Maynor are the evening's soloists. . . . ¶ At the Church of the Heavenly Rest: Patrick Gardner leads the Riverside Choral Society, with soprano Marion Vernette Moore and baritone Jerrold Pope; works by Bach and Mahler complete the program. (Fifth Ave. at 90th St. For information about tickets, call 780-2181.)

American Symphony Orchestra—Leon Botstein conducts German Expressionist works: two one-act music-theatre pieces—Weill's "The Protagonist" and Hindemith's "Murderer, Hope of Women" (to a libretto by the painter

Oskar Kokoschka)—plus Franz Schreker's 1916 Chamber Symphony. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. May 10 at 8.)

Armenian Philharmonic—Loris Tjeknavorian conducts Shostakovich's "Festive Overture," Saint-Saëns's Cello Concerto No. 1 (with Alexander Chaushian), and Khachaturian's Symphony No. 2. (Carnegie Hall. May 10 at 8.)

Orpheus Chamber Orchestra—The conductorless ensemble performs Johannes Simon Mayr's "Elisa" Overture, a group of Mahler's "Des Knaben Wunderhorn" songs (with baritone Thomas Hampson), the première of Lee Hyla's "Trans," and Schubert's Symphony No. 2. (Carnegie Hall. May 11 at 8.)

Cappella Oratoriana—*The singers, plus a small* instrumental ensemble, offer seventeenth-century English sacred music, by Thomas Weelkes, John Dowland, and others. Dennis Bernard Delaney directs. (Oratory Church of St. Boniface, Willoughby and Duffield Sts., Brooklyn. 1-718 875-2096. May 11 at 8.)

Dessoff Choirs—Kent Tritle directs Rossini's "Petite Messe Solennelle," which is hardly *solennelle* and is *petite* only in its "orchestra" of piano duet and harmonium. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 12 at 8.)

Jupiter Symphony—Jens Nygaard conducts the première of Anton Kuerti's "Jupiter Concerto," for five winds and orchestra, Mendelssohn's two piano concertos (featuring David Buechner), and several arias by Handel (with baritone John Kramar). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. May 13 at 2 and 7 and May 14 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.)

Ascension Music—During the heady years of the Counter-Reformation, in the sixteenth century, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina defined the sound of Roman sacred music so indelibly that his style of counterpoint became the model for the ensuing four centuries of liturgical compositions. And it was a style worth perpetuating: nearly three hundred years after Palestrina's death, Gounod captured its essential qualities when he described it as "severe, ascetic music, calm and horizontal as the line of the ocean, monotonous by virtue of its serenity, anti-sensuous, and yet so intense in its contemplativeness that it verges sometimes on ecstasy." In this concert, Dennis Keene directs Palestrina's most celebrated work, the "Pope Marcellus" Mass, as well as a selection of the composer's offertories and motets. (Church of the Ascension, Fifth Ave. at 10th St. 254-8553. May 13 at 8.)

RECITALS

Four Nations Ensemble—The chamber group performs, among other works, compositions by Couperin and Michael Haydn, Handel's cantata "La Lucretia," and a selection of songs featuring soprano Dana Hanchard. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. May 8 at 8.)

St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble—May 8 at 8: Performing a divertimento by Michael Haydn and Franck's Piano Quintet, as well as songs with instrumental obbligatos, by Schubert, Strauss, and Deborah Drattell; featuring soprano Angelina Réaux. (Weill Recital Hall.) . . . ¶ May 14 at 6:30: A new free concert series continues with an all-Handel program: his D-Major Trumpet Suite and selections from his oratorios, featuring tenor John Elwes. (Temple Emanu-El, 1 E. 65th St.)

Bargemusic—Cellist Ronald Thomas and pianist Edward Auer perform Rachmaninoff's Cello Sonata; violinist Ida Levin joins them for Schubert's Piano Trio in B-Flat Major. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. May 9 at 7:30 and May 12 at 4.)

Marc-André Hamelin—The pianist offers Haydn's C-Major Sonata (No. 60), Nikolai Roslavets's Three Études, Ronn Yedidia's Sonata No. 3 ("Outcries"), Chopin's Barcarolle, Medtners's "Sonata Reminiscenza," and Rachmaninoff's Sonata No. 2. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 9 at 8.)

Mari Kimura—The violinist, known for her avant-garde investigations of her instrument's technical possibilities, performs her own works. (Loewe Theatre, New York University, 35 W. 44th St. May 9 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

Duo-Piano Festival—The concert includes contemporary works (by David Lang, Lois V Vierk, and others) for piano duet, performed by Anthony de Mare and Kathleen Supové and by the Double Edge ensemble. (Whitney Museum at Philip Morris, Park Ave. at 42nd St. May 10 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

Concert Royal—A chamber ensemble of players from the period-instrument orchestra presents works by the eighteenth-century French composers Rameau, Jean-Joseph Cassanéa de Mondonville, Jacques Duphly, and Louis Gabriel Guillemain, as well as one of Telemann's "Paris" Quartets. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. May 10 at 8.)

New York Festival of Song—An evening of love songs: four Schumann settings, Brahms's "Liebeslieder Waltzes" (Op. 52), and newly commissioned pieces by ten contemporary composers, mostly American: John Musto, Jeffrey Stock, Ned Rorem, Richard Danielpour, Davide Zannoni, Dalit Hadass Warshaw, James Sellars, Jane Kamarov, Bright Sheng, and John Corigliano. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. May 11 at 8.)

Tashi—The much acclaimed ensemble of clarinet and strings, increasingly scarce now that its members have become famous soloists, convenes to perform clarinet quintets by Weber and Brahms, among other works. Presented by the People's Symphony Society. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. May 12 at 2.)

New York Philharmonic Ensembles—Members of the orchestra perform a Telemann trio sonata, Dvořák's D-Major Piano Quartet (Op. 23), and Stravinsky's "L'Histoire du Soldat." (Merkin Concert Hall. May 12 at 3.)

Laura Frautschi—The violinist is assisted by pianist Pedja Muzijevic in Franck's Sonata

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and a Schubert Sonatina. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. May 12 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

Ex Umbris—The early-music quartet offers music from the late-fifteenth-century court of Ercole I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, including works by Johannes Ghiselin and Josquin Desprez; with countertenor Drew Minter. (Nour Foundation, 322 W. 108th St. May 12 at 8. For information about tickets, call 662-4471.)

Quintet of the Americas—Works by Mozart, Lowell Liebermann, José Bernardo, and Astor Piazzolla, among others, performed by the woodwind quintet, with pianist Elena Abend. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 14 at 2.)

Do the right thing: Mother's Day, May 12.

CAROLYN GOWDY

ALSO OF INTEREST

RIVERSIDE SYMPHONY: George Rothman conducts Beethoven's Symphony No. 4, Bartók's "Dance Suite," and Stephen Hartke's Violin Concerto (with Michelle Makarski). (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. May 8 at 8.) . . . **DOWNTOWN CHAMBER & OPERA PLAYERS:** In recent art songs by American composers. (Greenwich House Music School, 46 Barrow St. 242-4770. May 9 at 8.) . . . **PIEDMONT CHAMBER PLAYERS:** Faculty members of the North Carolina School of the Arts perform music by Mozart, Hindemith, and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. May 9 at 8.) . . . **MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC SYMPHONY:** Richard Danielpour's "Toward the Splendid City," Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 5 (featuring John Kim), and Sibelius's Symphony No. 2, with Sixten Ehrling conducting. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. May 10 at 8. No tickets necessary.) . . . **I CANTORI DI NEW YORK:** In a wide-ranging choral program. (Calvary Episcopal Church, Park Ave. S. at 21st St. May 11 at 8. Tickets at the door.) . . . **ELEONOR BINDMAN:** Playing harpsichord works by Bach and Domenico Scarlatti. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 1-718 885-2478. May 12 at noon.) . . . **NEW YORK YOUTH SYMPHONY:** Miguel Harth-Bedoya leads the première of Eric Samuelson's "Subliminal Trauma," in addition to Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. (Carnegie Hall. May 12 at 3. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 581-5933.) . . . **NOTRE DAME STRING TRIO:** In music by Hindemith, Villa-Lobos, and David Diamond. (Weill Recital Hall. May 13 at 8.) . . . **DREW MINTER:** The countertenor, in recital with organist Donald George. (Church of the Transfiguration, 1 E. 29th St. May 14 at 12:30. No tickets necessary.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Mother Lode—Something for every mother you know. For the horticultural, Wave Hill offers child-size and, an hour later, adult workshops in bouquet building. (W. 249th St. at Independence Ave., the Bronx. May 11 at 1. For information, call 1-718 549-3200.) . . . ¶ For the literary, Mary Gordon, Jane Shapiro, and Ronni Sandroff read their contributions to "Mothers," a collection of short stories by writers currently engaged in mothering. (Shakespeare & Co., 939 Lexington Ave., at 68th St. May 11 at 1. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ For the tropical, a Caribbean lineup (the Mighty Sparrow, Super Blue, Crossfyah, X-Tatik, Ras Iley, King David Rudder, et al.) gets highly musical. (Whitman Hall, Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts, Brooklyn College. May 11 at 8. . . . The Theatre at Madison Square Garden. May 12 at 7. For tickets to either concert, call 307-7171.) . . . ¶ For the sentimental, Marilyn Michaels sings about her mother, the erstwhile Yiddish Theatre thespian Fraydele Oysher. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. May 12 at 3.)

Cosmicomics—The Brooklyn Academy of Music presents a weekend of international children's entertainment: the theatrical ensemble Grupo 55, from Mexico City; the Canadian clown Tom Kubinek; the Cashore Marionettes, from Conshohocken, Pennsylvania; world music from Morocco, Ireland, and Brazil; and other acts for the global child. Miss Piggy and her colleagues are honorary chairmuppets. You can come for a particular event or buy a day's pass and stick around. (30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. May 11-12, from noon to 4. For more information, call 1-718 636-4100.)

Readings—May 8 at 6:30: Actors read Edgar Allan Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Sphinx," "The Cask of Amontillado," and a few of his lugubrious poems. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.) . . . ¶ May 9 at 7:30: Poets Robert Fitterman ("Metropolis"), Kim Rosenfield ("℞ and Cool Clean Chemistry"), and Hugh Seidman ("People Live, They Have Lives") read from their work. (Hebrew Union College, 1 W. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ May 10 at 7: Public defender Denis Woychuk reads from "Attorney for the Damned," his memoir of his efforts on behalf of the criminally insane. (West Side Y, 5 W. 63rd St. Tickets at the door.)

Talks—May 8 at 6: British sculptor Rachel Whiteread (see Galleries—Downtown) talks about her inside-out sculptures—full-size plaster-cast negatives of the interiors of abandoned homes in London. (Great Hall, Third Ave. at 7th St. For more information, call 353-4195.) . . . ¶ May 8 at 7: Male and female veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade screen a film devoted to their contributions to the defense of the Spanish Republic. (Puffin Room, 435 Broome St. For reservations, call 343-2881.) . . . ¶ May 14 at 8: A faction from *The National Review* (polemicist Dinesh D'Souza and editor Kate O'Beirne) meets its counterpart from *The Nation* (columnist Christopher Hitchens and Columbia law professor Patricia Williams) to debate "Resolved: Affirmative Action Should Be Abolished." (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd. 242-8400, ext. 228.)

Walk—May 11 at 1: The Brooklyn Heights Association offers pedestrians the opportunity to wander through antebellum Brooklyn Heights, in a self-guided tour of the neighborhood's formal gardens and riparian homes. For more information, call 1-718 858-9193.

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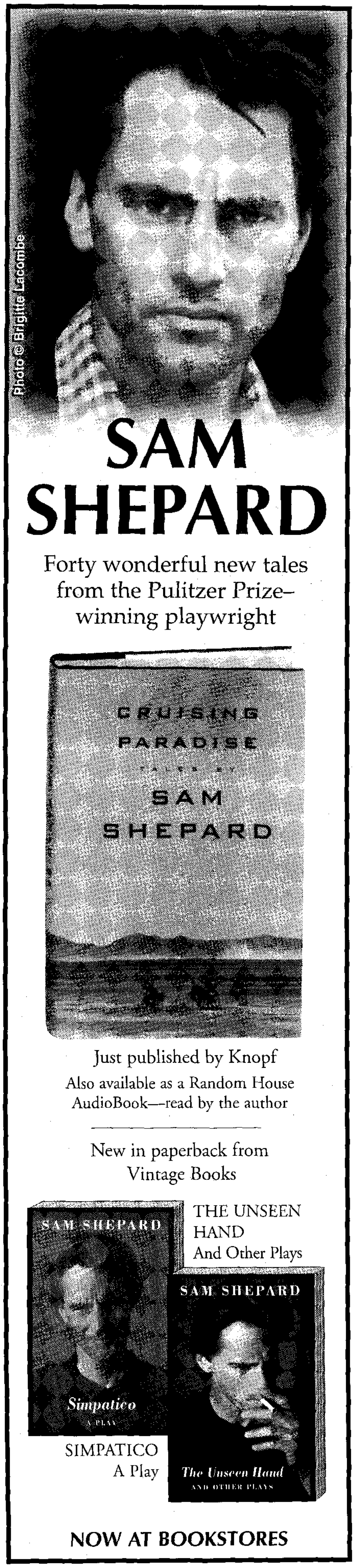
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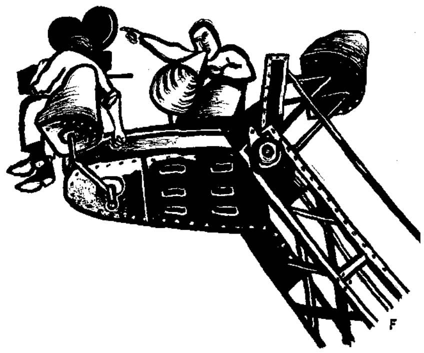


FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

Boys—Winona Ryder plays a woman on the run and Lukas Haas the high-school senior who hides her, in a romantic comedy written and directed by Stacy Cochran, from James Salter's short story "Twenty Minutes." Opening May 10. (84th Street Sixplex, 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 4, Sutton, and 23rd St. West Triplex.)

Cold Comfort Farm—John Schlesinger directs Malcolm Bradbury's adaptation of Stella Gibbon's 1932 novel. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) Opening May 10. (Lincoln Square and Village Theatre VII.)

Dead Man—A Western written and directed by Jim Jarmusch, in which Johnny Depp plays an accountant turned outlaw. With Gary Farmer as his shamanistic sidekick. Opening May 10. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

4 Tales of 2 Cities—A quartet of short films: "The Duke of Groove," "Boy Crazy Girl Crazier," "Urban Legend," and "Phinehas," directed by Griffin Dunne, Illeana Douglas, Adrienne Shelly, and Fisher Stevens, respectively. Opening May 8. (Film Forum.)

Open Season—Robert Wuhl stars as a public-TV-station employee, in a comedy that he also wrote and directed. With Helen Shaver, Gailard Sartain, and Rod Taylor. Opening May 10. (Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 72nd Street East, and Village East Cinemas.)

Original Gangstas—A pro-football coach (Fred Williamson) returns to his home town to crush a street gang, in an action movie directed by Larry Cohen. With Jim Brown and Pam Grier. Opening May 10. (84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 1, Embassy 3, Manhattan Twin, 19th Street East 6, and Waverly.)

Someone Else's America—Goran Paskaljević's comedy, about a family of illegal aliens from Montenegro living in Brooklyn. With Tom Conti and Miki Manojlović. Written by Gordan Mihić. Opening May 10. (Quad Cinema.)

Twister—Competing teams of meteorologists, one led by Helen Hunt, the other by Cary Elwes, chase a tornado in a thriller directed by Jan De Bont. With Bill Paxton. Written by Michael Crichton and Anne-Marie Martin. Opening May 10. (Criterion Center, Gemini, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village East Cinemas.)

Under the Domim Tree—Eli Cohen's adaptation of Gila Almagor's 1992 autobiographical novel, about teen-age war orphans in an Israeli youth village in 1953. Written by the novelist and Eyal Sher. In Hebrew. Opening May 10. (Quad Cinema.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 32.)

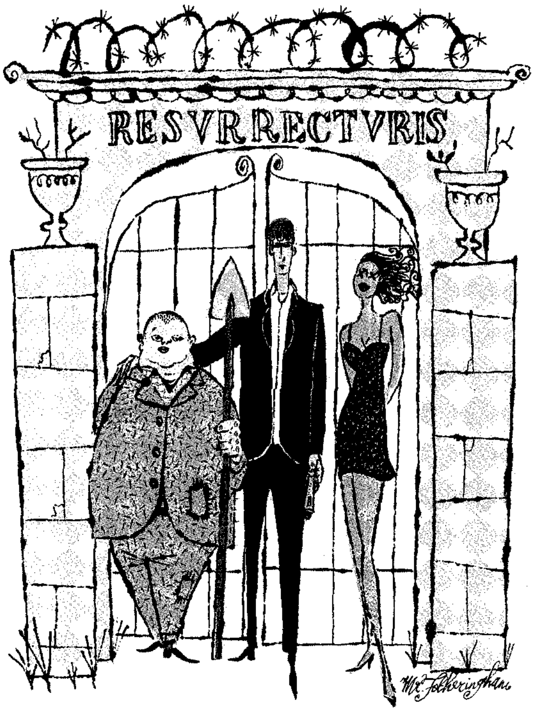
Barb Wire—Pamela Anderson Lee is a bar owner and a revolutionary, in an action film directed by David Hogan. With Temuera Morrison. Written by Charles Pfarrer and Ilene Chaiken. (84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Birdcage—Mike Nichols's remake of "La Cage aux Folles" (1978) largely contents itself with decking out what appears to be a profoundly, unalterably French farce in American drag; the cautious, sensible approach taken by Nichols and his screenwriter, Elaine May, has the drawback of making this movie feel a little, as the French might say, de trop. Although Robin Williams and Nathan Lane, as the bickering middle-aged lovers originally played by Ugo Tognazzi and Michel Serrault, are skillful, the script doesn't give them much opportunity to distinguish themselves from their memorable predecessors. Oddly, the funniest performer here is Gene Hackman, playing an aggressively straight, family-values-spouting politician. Also with Dianne Wiest.—T.R. (3/18/96) (Baronet, Coronet, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Orpheum VII, 23rd St. West Triplex, 34th St. East, and Village Theatre VII.)

Butterfly Kiss—Amanda Plummer and Saskia Reeves play homicidal lovers, in Michael Winterbottom's English road movie. Written by Frank Cottrell Boyce. (Cinema 3rd Avenue and Quad Cinema.)

Captives—A dentist (Julia Ormond) falls in love with a convict (Tim Roth) in a London prison, in a drama directed by Angela Pope and written by Frank Deasy. (Eastside Playhouse and Village Theatre VII.)

Cemetery Man—It begins promisingly, like one of the old Mario Bava Italian horror movies: a graveyard watchman (Rupert Everett, in various stages of undress) who dispatches the dead when they come back to life falls for a beautiful widow, and their romance is sexy, ghoulish fun. But eventually the watch-



François Hadji-Lazaro, Rupert Everett, and Anna Falchi in "Cemetery Man."

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

man loses his mind, becoming unable to distinguish the dead from the living, and the movie loses its humor as it turns into a listless existential exercise about the meaning of life and death. The director, Michele Soavi, shoots with a hip, decorative eye—he has a gift for atmosphere—but his story is missing the sensational excesses of a "Re-Animator" or an "Evil Dead 2"; he takes the madness seriously. Also with François Hadji-Lazaro and Anna Falchi.—B.D. (State and Village East Cinemas.)

The Craft—A thriller in which four Los Angeles teen-agers (Robin Tunney, Fairuza Balk, Neve Campbell, and Rachel True) take up witchcraft. Directed by Andrew Fleming. Written by the director and Peter Filardi. (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, and Orpheum VII.)

Fargo—Everybody in Joel and Ethan Coen's movie talks with painful slowness, as if the icy Minnesota air were freezing their chops; the resulting mood is lugubrious and oddly winning. The story, about a hopeless businessman (William H. Macy) who hires a couple of crooks (Peter Stormare and Steve Buscemi) to kidnap his wife, offers the usual Coen compound of random daftness and concentrated violence. Frances McDormand has a high old time as the police chief of the town of Brainerd; decent and unhurried (her character is seven months pregnant), she brings order to the weirdness and warms it up.—A.L. (3/25/96) (Art Greenwich Twin, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and 19th Street East 6.)

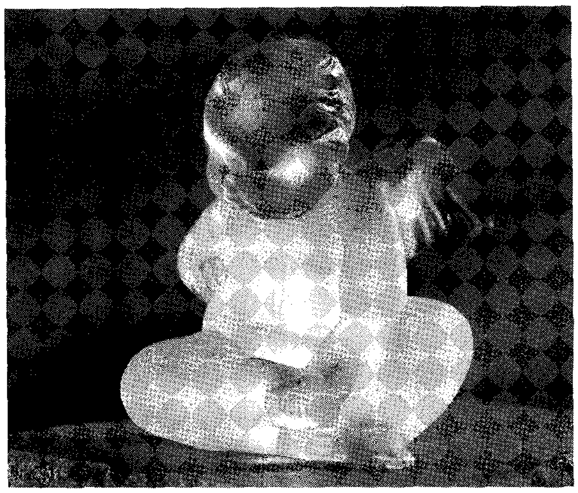
Flirting with Disaster—David O. Russell's farcical road movie sets a thirtyish New Yorker (Ben Stiller), adopted as a small child, on a cross-country search for his biological parents, accompanied by his wife (Patricia Arquette) and an adoption-agency official (Téa Leoni). Despite some expert performances—by George Segal and Mary Tyler Moore as the adoptive parents (nervous urban kvetches), and Alan Alda and Lily Tomlin as the biological ones (devious ex-hippies)—the picture remains as confused as its hero; unlike him, it never does find its identity.—T.R. (4/15/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, 86th Street East Twin, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 68th St. Playhouse, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Great White Hype—Samuel L. Jackson stars as a boxing promoter who sends a retired fighter (Peter Berg) into the ring against the champion (Damon Wayans), in a comedy directed by Reginald Hudlin. With Jeff Goldblum. Written by Tony Hendra and Ron Shelton. (Chelsea Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, National Twin, Orpheum VII, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas.)

I Shot Andy Warhol—Lili Taylor plays Valerie Solanas, the writer who in 1968 pumped the Pop artist full of lead, in a drama directed by Mary Harron, who co-wrote the screenplay with Daniel Minahan. With Jared Harris as Warhol and Stephen Dorff as Candy Darling. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sutton.)

James and the Giant Peach—Adapted from Roald Dahl's surreal adventure story, Henry Selick's short, spiky movie is pretty adventurous itself. James (Paul Terry), a young orphan, goes to live with a brace of loathsome aunts (Miriam Margolyes and Joanna Lumley). His chance to flee their Dickensian gloom comes with the appearance of a magic peach in the garden: he crawls inside, where he finds a posse of insect friends, and travels by air and sea to an improbably benign New York. The film opens and closes on live action, with rubbery stop-motion animation in between. The bugs, designed by the children's illustrator Lane Smith, are enlivened by voice-overs from, among others, Richard Dreyfuss and Susan Sarandon. The movie, like the peach, offers a bumpy ride, and the level of invention dips and soars without warning, but Selick's feeling for texture—for the climates of bliss and apprehension—is so sure that you gradually

The Gift of Love



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come to relish the oddity of the whole enterprise. As a tribute to the cranky genius of Dahl, it's both fond and, in the best sense, fruitful.—A.L. (4/22/96) (86th Street East Twin, Lincoln Square, Olympia, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Village Theatre VII. . . . ¶ Embassy 3; through May 9.)

Jane Eyre—Except for its big, passionate score (by Alessio Vlad and Claudio Capponi), Franco Zeffirelli's adaptation of Charlotte Brontë's novel is more sedate than you might expect—and it's occasionally slow going, because there's an awful lot of plot to get through. The reason to see it is Charlotte Gainsbourg, who plays Jane with just the right combination of ethereality and guts: tall, pale, and thin as a reed, she looks like a supermodel with a broken nose. William Hurt makes a rather delicate but acceptable Rochester. With Anna Paquin as the young Jane, and Joan Plowright as Rochester's housekeeper, Mrs. Fairfax. Written by Zeffirelli and Hugh Whitemore.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center and Paris.)

Kids in the Hall: Brain Candy—After five years on television, the great cross-dressing Canadian troupe gets its own movie and runs with it, to greater effect than such recent Lorne Michaels protégés as Chris Farley and Adam Sandler have. The plot, about a Prozac-like pill that can make everyone happy, allows the five sketchmeisters to populate the screen in a multiple-role heaven that would stir Alec Guinness's heart. Not all of the pieces work, but a few are truly inspired. (Scott Thompson's out-of-the-closet number—an homage to Gene Kelly, shot in Stanley Donen color and complete with suburban lawn sprinklers—is a real jaw-dropper.) The Kids haven't yet mastered the ebb-and-flow rhythms of Monty Python, but, more often than not, they make their funny points.—B.D. (Lincoln Square, Manhattan Twin, and Waverly.)

Last Dance—Although Bruce Beresford's capital-punishment drama, in which Sharon Stone plays a murderer awaiting execution, is bound to be compared with "Dead Man Walking," most of the optimistic moviegoers who buy tickets to this new picture probably aren't expecting docudrama realism. More likely, they're hoping for a flamboyant death-row weepie on the order of "I Want to Live!" (1958), in which Susan Hayward tottered on high heels to a date with destiny in the gas chamber at San Quentin. No one spends good money to watch Sharon Stone underact. But that's exactly what she does here, giving a quiet, unmannered performance as a remorseful killer whose case arouses the interest of a young lawyer (dull Rob Morrow) in the Governer's office. Stone's ability to suppress her natural extravagance and remain in character would be more impressive if the screenwriter, Ron Koslow, had supplied her with a character worth remaining in. This picture won't satisfy anyone: it's too hokey and melodramatic to be taken seriously, yet too restrained to rate as a camp classic. Also with Randy Quaid and Peter Gallagher.—T.R. (Cinema I, 84th Street Sixplex, 86th Street East Twin, Guild, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

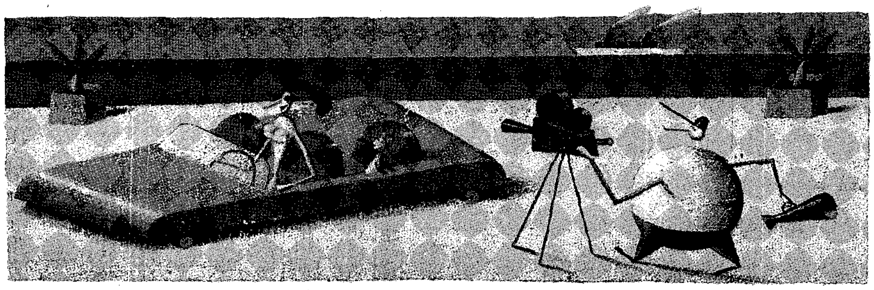
Madame Butterfly—*Puccini's opera, directed by* Frédéric Mitterrand. With Ying-Huang and Richard Troxell. In Italian. (Lincoln Square.)

Ma Saison Préférée—As in a tour through a hothouse, you relish the grace and fragrance, but you can hardly breathe. André Téchiné's latest drama is a love story of a peculiar and thwarted kind: the central couple is a sister and brother in middle age. Émilie (Catherine Deneuve) and Antoine (Daniel Auteuil) bicker and snap and block each other out with the constancy of twin souls; their failures outside the family—he is a loner, she the cool observer of her own sagging marriage—merely point up their needs within it. When their mother takes ill, everything comes to a head, and the movie treads delicately along the borders of incest. Auteuil has a couple of great moments when it all becomes too much for him: he escapes to the bathroom, sits on the toilet, and plans his next move. Téchiné—prolific, uneven, unfailingly elegant—has a fine feeling for climate, both emotional and seasonal, and the picture maintains a gliding rhythm even at moments of crisis. What *mars it is the high-flown talk that trickles* on when none is required; the characters, like many of their predecessors in French cinema, spend much of the time speaking as if they've recently escaped from a maximum-security novel. In French.—A.L. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Mulholland Falls—Lee Tamahori directs Nick Nolte, Chazz Palminteri, Michael Madsen, and Chris Penn in a police drama set in Los Angeles in the nineteen-fifties. With Melanie Griffith, Treat Williams, and John Malkovich. Written by Pete Dexter. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village East Cinemas.)

Mystery Science Theater 3000: The Movie—The MST experience—watching a terrible old movie while silhouetted figures pummel it with wisecracks—moves from the small screen to the big one with all the jeering camaraderie of the show's hosts, robots Tom Servo and Crow and head writer Michael J. Nelson, intact. The "stinking cinematic suppository" they've chosen to heckle is the 1955 science-fiction film "This Island Earth," and, though they've sacrificed some of their more esoteric humor to encourage audience participation, there's rarely a groaner in the bunch. Nelson and his chief co-writers—Trace Beaulieu, Jim Mallon, and Kevin Murphy—hurl such a cheerful barrage of jokes and innuendos that the audience has to stifle its laughter or risk missing the next cheesy pun. It's a film lover's dream: a great bad time at the movies.—B.D. (Village Theatre VII.)

Nelly and Monsieur Arnaud—The latest demonstration of Parisian decorum from the French director Claude Sautet ("Un Coeur en Hiver") presents a set of characters who betray their true desires by refusing to indulge them. Nelly (Emmanuelle Béart) leaves her marriage and goes to work for Arnaud (Michel Serrault), a former judge who is writing his memoirs. The two tiptoe toward love, then pull back. The nearest that Nelly comes to the brink is a fling with Arnaud's publisher, Vincent (Jean-Hugues Anglade); what she desires in him, it would seem, is a younger version of Arnaud himself. The movie is played (as you would expect) with watchful finesse, particularly by the morose and sardonic Serrault, but you sometimes long for a little wildness; Béart's character should be driving men crazy, but what does she do? She *interests* them. With a delicious cameo by Michel Lonsdale, whose presence suggests an altogether creepier and funnier film. In French.—A.L. (4/22/96) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)



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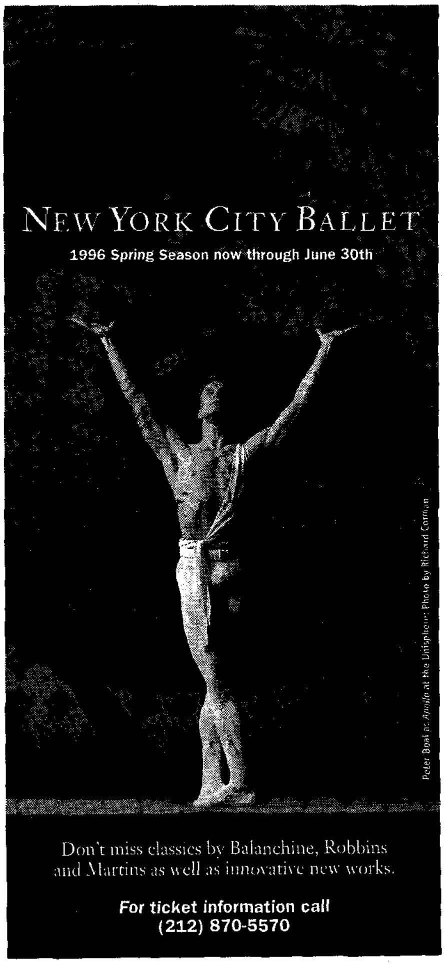

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The Pallbearer—In Matthew Reeves's comedy, David Schwimmer plays a young architect who agrees to eulogize a recently deceased but long-forgotten schoolmate. With Gwyneth Paltrow and Barbara Hershey. Written by the director and Jason Katims. (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema II, Lincoln Square, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas. . . . ¶ Embassy 1; through May 9. . . . ¶ Embassy 2; starting May 10.)

Primal Fear—In Gregory Hoblit's conventional but enjoyable courtroom drama, Richard Gere plays an attorney defending a young man accused of killing the Archbishop of Chicago. The story is full of tired characters (a prosecutor who's an old flame, a corrupt city developer), yet Frances McDormand, Laura Linney, John Mahoney, and Andre Braugher are all so casually skillful that Gere's c'mon-you-know-you-want-me style has the room it needs to play. But it's Edward Norton, as the Boo Radley-like defendant, who steals the movie. Hoblit has an economical style, and he gets the job done with very little fuss.—B.D. (Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, New York Twin, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Quest—Jean-Claude Van Damme's latest bone-cruncher is an overly familiar tournament movie about martial artists in less than mortal combat, but this time he gets to direct, too. Lightweight though the picture is, he acquits himself quite nicely: he grabs fewer vainglorious closeups than Mel Gibson did in "Braveheart" and shrewdly gives his supporting actors, Roger Moore and James Remar, most of the lines. The film has one eye—O.K., maybe both—on the foreign markets, but, of its kind, it's entertaining.—B.D. (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, National Twin, Olympia, Orpheum VII, Regency, 34th Street Showplace, and Waverly.)

Sunset Park—Rhea Perlman plays a high-school basketball coach, in a comedy directed by Steve Gomer. Written by Seth Zvi Rosenfeld and Kathleen McGhee-Anderson. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

A Thin Line Between Love and Hate—A comedy thriller directed by and starring Martin Lawrence, as a night-club promoter who seduces his dream girl (Lynn Whitfield). Written by the director and Bentley Kyle Evans, Kenny Buford, and Kim Bass. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Truth About Cats and Dogs—The umpteenth attempt this year to restore innocent romance to the movies by delaying sex between the main characters. In her first starring role, Janeane Garofalo plays a radio veterinarian. One day a caller (Ben Chaplin, a polite young English actor with wavy black hair) asks her out, but she feels insecure, so she gets her beautiful neighbor (Uma Thurman) to impersonate her and tags along pretending to be a friend. Garofalo has a certain barbed charm, but it's put to shallow use here: she's a dog, the movie says, but she's deep—she reads Simone de Beauvoir's letters to Sartre. The worse insult is to Thurman, who is condemned to play yet another male trophy, a fantasy girl who scrunches her nose when she laughs and walks like a newborn fawn. Directed by Michael Lehmann.—S.K. (Art Greenwich Twin, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Park & 86th Street Cinemas.)

Wallace and Gromit: The Best of Aardman Animation—This seventy-seven-minute retrospective of work from the British studio is probably the most fun in town. The Aardman artists employ plasticine models in stop-motion; there is something deadpan, even mournful, in their bendiness. The highlight is three shorts by three-time Oscar winner Nick Park. Brief, bright, unpretentious, and graced with the kind of immaculate gags that we associate with the slapstick of the nineteen-twenties, Park's movies have a style that you can recognize within half a second; can any of today's other filmmakers claim as much?—A.L. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

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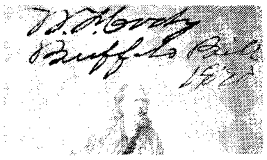

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STATE, Broadway at 45th St.
SUTTON I AND 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
23RD ST. WEST TRIPLEX, 333 W. 23rd St.
34TH ST. EAST, 241 E. 34th St.
34TH STREET SHOWPLACE, 238 E. 34th St.
VILLAGE EAST CINEMAS, Second Ave. at 12th St.
VILLAGE THEATRE VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
WAVERLY I AND 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
WORLDWIDE CINEMAS, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
ZIEGFELD, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

COOGAN'S BLUFF (1968)—A competent piece of tough-cop worship. The director, Don Siegel, pits the lean, mean, yet courtly Arizona lawman Coogan (Clint Eastwood)—who's trying to extradite a Manhattan-based biker-hippie (Don Stroud)—against a bunch of derisive New Yorkers (including, most amusingly, Lee J. Cobb as a Gotham police detective who speaks in an exhausted snarl). Coogan's running, jumping, and standing-still vaudeville with lowlifes and at least one highbrow (a probation officer, played by Susan Clark) has more than a few grungy pleasures. Siegel uses Eastwood's sculpted features for satirical effects—when the star emotes, it's like a stolid public monument cracking into a leer or a scowl. With Seymour Cassel as a young probationer who paws Clark's breasts, and a true relic of the era: a ludicrous psychedelic club scene (the joint is called the Pigeon-Toed Orange Peel). Script by Herman Miller, Howard Rodman, and Dean Reisner.—M.S. (Museum of Modern Art; May 12 and May 14.)

FOLIES-BERGÈRE (1935)—Maurice Chevalier, in a dual role as a famous sporting baron who's a devil with the ladies and a Folies-Bergère entertainer whose most popular number is an impersonation of the baron. Inevitably, the baron hires the entertainer to take his place, and the entertainer winds up in the boudoir of the baroness (Merle Oberon). This film is a sumptuous entertainment, and it features some lovely songs, including "You Took the Words Right Out of My Heart," "I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance with You," and "Rhythm of the Rain"—during this one, the chorus girls are loaded down with umbrellas and dance glumly in several inches of water. With Ann Sothern and Eric Blore. Roy Del Ruth directed.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; May 12-13.)

THE GAY DIVORCÉE (1934)—Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers appeared together in "Flying Down to Rio" in 1933, but this was their first co-starring film. The plot is trivial French farce (about mistaken identities), but the dances are among the wittiest and the most lyrical expressions of American romanticism on the screen. It may be accurate to say that no one who saw them do "The Continental" or watched the great, tense, seductive dance they perform to Cole Porter's "Night and Day" has ever quite forgotten "The Gay Divorcée"—even if he thinks he has.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; May 10-11.)

HALLELUJAH I'M A BUM (1933)—A graceful romantic comedy, shot in sepia tones in imaginative Art Deco sets, directed by Lewis Milestone. The whimsical script was written by S. N. Behrman and Ben Hecht, and Rodgers and Hart provided the score. The time is the Depression. Wearing a white suit and hat and a dark shirt, Al Jolson is Bumper, the "mayor" of a group of hobos who hang out in Central Park—happy-go-lucky thirties versions of beatniks. The film is uneven, but it has some of the rhythm and charm of the early-thirties René Clair musicals (especially "À Nous la Liberté"). With Harry Langdon as Jolson's crony, Egghead; Frank Morgan as the dapper, Jimmy Walker-like Mayor of New York City; Chester Conklin as Sunday; and the black actor Edgar Connor as Acorn.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; May 8.)

THE KILLER (1989)—Both sides of the John Woo debate (visionary synthesist or idiot savant?) can garner ammunition from this key work. Danny Lee plays a cop who can see the heroic dimensions of a murderer, a professional assassin (the redoubtable Chow Yun-fat) who has accidentally blinded a night-club singer and devoted himself to her recovery. As Chow scrambles from both the police and his employers (who want him offed for blowing his cover), gargantuan gunplay meets Victorian sentimentality and idealism, often in the same scene—the shooting will pause for declarations of friendship or statements of principle. Fans may swallow this jumble whole-hog; the rest of us may applaud the virtuoso staging, snicker at the histrionics, and find ourselves generally unwilling to suspend disbelief. Woo wrote the script; it's like Jean-Pierre Melville's "The Samurai" geared for gaudy catharses. In Cantonese.—M.S. (Cinema Village; May 10.)

The Phantom President (1932)—This musical political satire was George M. Cohan's first talking picture; for anyone who cares about American theatrical history it's an indispensable record of Cohan's style—which is almost nothing like the styles of James Cagney and Joel Grey when they played him. Cohan is dapper and bland; he seems to wear a mask of ordinariness, and only the droopy-lidded eyes, and sometimes the awareness in the smile, clue us in to the theatrical instinct at work. There's a good satirical idea here: Cohan plays a double role—a quiet Presidential candidate and the extroverted look-alike who campaigns for him. With Claudette Colbert and Jimmy Durante. Norman Taurog directed.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; May 8.)

At MOMA, a retrospective of Don Siegel films.

MARK ZINGARELLI

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2 and 3, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—**Theatre 2:** A program of musicals made from 1929 until 1934, the first year the Hays Code was strictly enforced. May 8: "Hallelujah I'm a Bum" (†) and "The Phantom President" (†). . . . May 9: "Stage Mother" (1933, Charles Brabin) and "Torch Singer" (1933, Alexander Hall and George Somnes). . . . May 10-11: "The Gay Divorcée" (†) and "The Merry Widow" (1934, Ernst Lubitsch). . . . May 12-13: "Top Hat" (1935, Mark Sandrich) and "Folies Bergère" (†). . . . May 13 (evening only): "I Am Suzanne!" (1933, Rowland V. Lee) and "Let's Go Native" (1930, Leo McCarey). . . . May 14: A program of short films, featuring Burns and Allen, the Nicholas Brothers, Al Jolson, and others. . . . **Theatre 3:** "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg" (1964, Jacques Demy; in French), with Catherine Deneuve.

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363)—A showing of films featuring the Hong Kong action star Chow Yun-fat; all in Cantonese, with English subtitles. May 8 and May 12: "God of Gamblers" (1989, Wong Jing) and "Once a Thief" (1991, John Woo). . . . May 9 and May 14: "Hong Kong 1941" (1984, Leong Po-chih) and "The Story of Woo Viet" (1981, Ann Hui). . . . May 10: "Peace Hotel" (1995, Wai Ka-fai) and "The Killer" (†). . . . May 11: "Hard-Boiled" (1992, Woo) and "City on Fire" (1987, Ringo Lam). . . . May 13: "Treasure Hunt" (1994, Jeff Lau) and "Dream Lovers" (1986, Tony Au).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films directed by Don Siegel. May 9 at 2:30: "Charley Varrick" (1973). . . . May 9 at 6: "The Big Steal" (1949). . . . May 9 at 8: "The Killers" (1964). . . . May 10 at 2:30: "The Shootist" (1976). . . . May 10 at 6: "The Beguiled" (1971). . . . May 10 at 8: "The Lineup" (1958). . . . May 11 at 2: "Dirty Harry" (1971). . . . May 11 at 5 and May 14 at 6: "Madigan" (1968). . . . May 12 at 2 and May 13 at 2:30: "Edge of Eternity" (1959). . . . May 12 at 5 and May 14 at 2:30: "Coogan's Bluff" (†). . . . May 13 at 6: "Death of a Gunfighter" (1969). . . . ¶ May 9 at 3 and 6: "Synthetic Pleasures" (1995, Iara Lee). . . . ¶ May 10 at 3 and May 12 at 2:30: "Too Wise Wives" (1921, Lois Weber; silent). . . . ¶ May 10 at 6: "Alias Jimmy Valentine" (1915, Maurice Tourneur; silent). . . . ¶ May 10 at 8 and May 11 at 2: "The Night of the Film-Makers" (1995, Edgar Reitz; in German). . . . ¶ May 11 at 5: "Within Our Gates" (1920, Oscar Micheaux; silent). . . . ¶ May 12 at 5: "The Eternal Mother" (1912; D. W. Griffth; silent) and "The Mothering Heart" (1913, Griffith; silent). . . . ¶ May 14 at 3: "The Patchwork Girl of Oz" (1914, J. Farrell MacDonald; silent) and "A Florida Enchantment" (1914, Sidney Drew; silent).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level (875-5600)—A program of films from Iran.

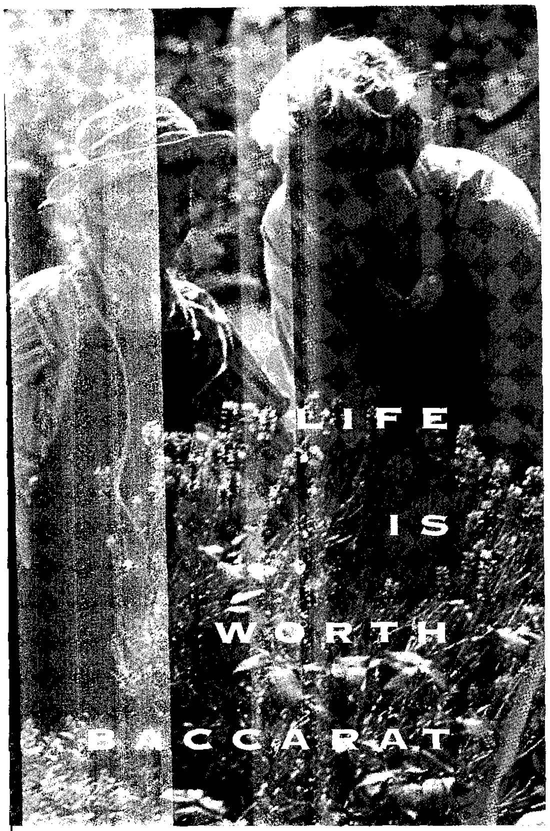
A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On May 12 at 7, the feature will be "The Group" (1966, Sidney Lumet).

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—May 14 at 7: "It's a Wonderful Life" (1946, Frank Capra). . . . May 14 at 9:15: "Wings of Desire" (1987, Win Wenders; in English, French, and German).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (1-718 784-0077)—May 11 at 2: "Suspicion" (1941, Alfred Hitchcock), with Cary Grant and Joan Fontaine. . . . May 11 at 4: "Secret Beyond the Door" (1948, Fritz Lang), with Joan Bennett and Michael Redgrave. . . . May 12 at 2: "Psycho" (1960, Hitchcock), with Anthony Perkins. . . . May 12 at 4:30: "While the City Sleeps" (1956, Lang), with Dana Andrews.

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—May 10 at 8 and 10: "Gloria" (1980, John Cassavetes). . . . May 11 at 6: "End of a Priest" (1968, Evald Schorm; in Czech). . . . May 11 at 8 and May 12 at 7:30: "Mother's Day" (1996, Mike Russo). . . . May 12 at 6 and 9: "Love Streams" (1984, Cassavetes).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—May 14 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "La Vieille Dame Qui Marchait dans la Mer" (1991, Laurent Heynemann; in French), with Jeanne Moreau and Michel Serrault.



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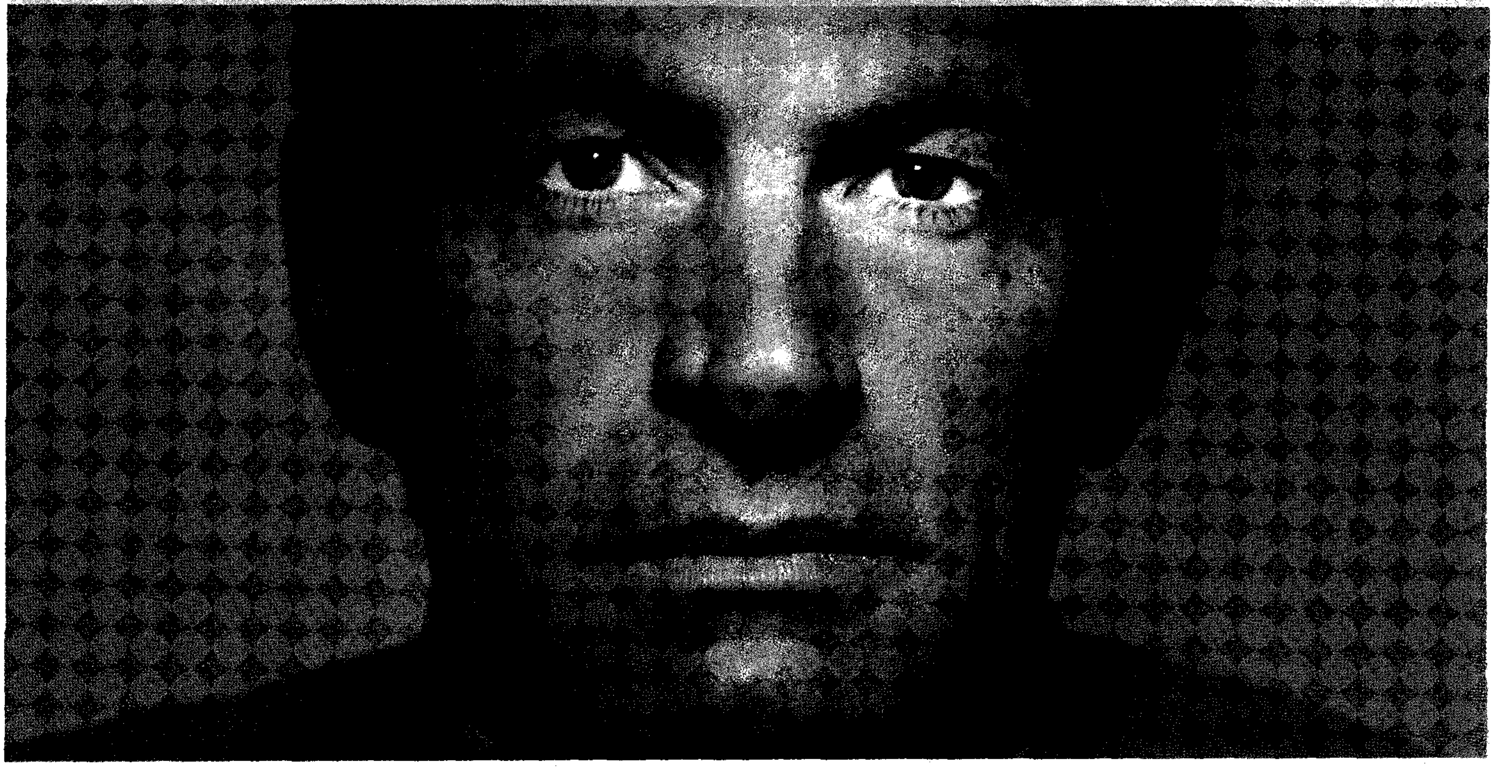

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THE
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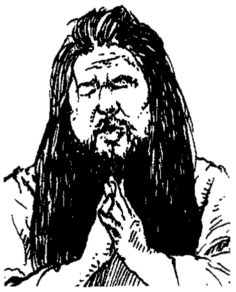


Shoko Asahara

All martyrdoms, Oscar Wilde once observed, look mean to the beholder. Oscar's certainly did. But the same can scarcely be said of the near-blind Buddhist guru Shoko Asahara, who is being tried for seventeen crimes and is charged with, among other things, murder, attempted murder, and causing serious injury to three thousand seven hundred and ninety-six people—victims of last year's nerve-gas attack on the Tokyo subway, which Asahara allegedly ordered. Whereas Wilde was exposed to public contempt, standing handcuffed on a train platform on his way to Reading prison, Asahara is driven to Tokyo District Court in a curtained bus, through streets cordoned off by riot police, with an escort of seven police cars. Calling the hearings Japan's O. J. Simpson obsession understates the case; while race, fame, money, and power were involved in Los Angeles, many Japanese feel that the safety of their social order itself may be on trial.

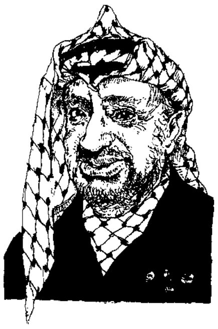
Accordingly, prosecutors have crafted their case with the precision of a Seiko stopwatch. Disciples who pleaded guilty in earlier hearings have named Asahara as their mentor; one has already received a seven-year sentence for producing the nerve gas used in the subway attack. To strip Asahara of religious aura, the presiding judge, Fumihiro Abe, has denied him permission to appear in his purple robe, saying that a prison outfit of dark-blue sweatpants and a nylon jacket "seems fine for the purpose of the hearing." When, at the opening session, the defendant gave his name as Shoko Asahara, Judge Abe asked, "Isn't your name Chizuo Matsumoto?"

"I have cast that name away," the guru responded calmly. He gave his occupation as "the leader of Aum Shinrikyo"—the True Teaching of Aum.

As the name of every one of his alleged victims in the subway attack was read out—a process that took almost four hours—Asahara was apparently lost in meditation. Many spectators, including the widow of a heroic subway worker, who sobbed quietly throughout the proceedings, expected a ringing denial, or at least an argument admitting or challenging this or that part of the case. Instead, the guru, ignoring the charges, made a three-minute statement in archaic Japanese studded with Buddhist terms. "I will try," he concluded, "to free humanity of its bondage, pain, and despair. Whatever suffering falls upon me I will bear, with holy love, for you all."

To anyone of Christian background, this has a familiar, not to say a blasphemous, ring. In a 1992 book, Asahara claimed to be Christ. The Gospel of St. Mark records that, reminded by Pontius Pilate "how many things they witness against thee . . . Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marveled." The judges want to try the man Chizuo Matsumoto for crimes the prosecutors say he committed here on earth; the prophet Shoko Asahara has challenged them to try his religion instead, and make a martyr of him if they dare. His cult, a version of Tantric Buddhism with a strong infusion of Judeo-Christianity, casts him as the Lamb of God, and the guru is clearly modelling his refusal to defend himself on the trial and condemnation of Jesus. Unknowingly, the prosecutors have helped his tussle for the symbolic high ground. More than twelve thousand people (many of them students hired by brash media companies) entered a lottery for forty-eight spectator seats available on the first day of the trial, looking uncomfortably like the Roman soldiers who cast lots for Christ's garments. The prosecutors have even found Asahara a Judas: Yoshihiro Inoue, twenty-six, a slavish disciple and "intelligence minister," who has been charged with murder, and who promises to confront his old master in court. "A thing is not necessarily true," Oscar Wilde also wrote, "because a man dies for it." The danger is that some gullible Japanese may disagree.

ARAFAT, THE PUNDIT



Yasir Arafat

On the evening of May 1st, after meeting with President Clinton in the Oval Office, Yasir Arafat, President of the Palestinian Authority, was feted at a small dinner given by Hani Masri, an Arab-American businessman, at the Meridian International Center, a Georgian mansion not far from the White House. The aura of the Oval Office visit still surrounded Arafat. As he shook hands with a guest, he said, "Wonderful." Then another "Wonderful." And down the line: "Wonderful."

Arafat's trip was part of a campaign swing, for Washington is one of the principal places where the Israeli election to be held on May 29th is being contested. In fact, Arafat's appearance was the culmination of a week of activities

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JARRETT HUDDLESTON

staged by the Administration to bolster the chances of Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who had met with Clinton twice in the preceding three days. "Peres will win," Arafat told a reporter. "But it will be very close." Peres's victory, he suggested, will depend upon the smaller political parties.

When Arafat was asked whether Operation Grapes of Wrath, the recent Israeli offensive against the Hezbollah, in which some one hundred and sixty Lebanese civilians were killed, has helped or hurt Peres with Israeli public opinion, he replied instantly, with a small but dramatic wave of his hand, "Helped. It has strengthened him a great deal." Even though support for Peres has been precipitously halved among Israeli Arabs since the offensive, Arafat declared, "They'll vote for Peres. They'll come back."

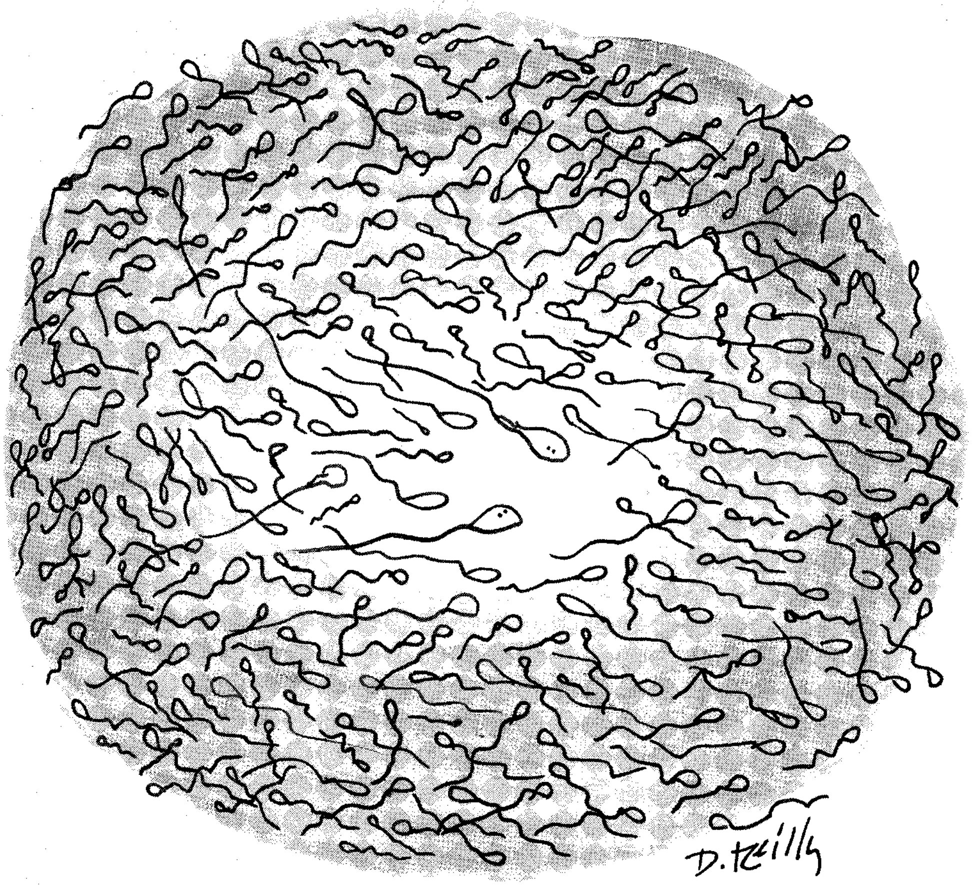
Arafat expressed contempt for the Hezbollah fundamentalists as being paid agents of the Iranians, who are also said to be the paymasters of Hamas. Arafat and Peres do indeed have the same enemies: the two terrorist groups, the Iranians, and the Likud, the Israeli opposition party. According to Arafat, Hamas is "hopelessly splintered," and can claim the allegiance of only "five per cent" of Palestinians. Yet he added that it is not really finished as a force, because of its Iranian backing. Through Hamas and Hezbollah, Iran influences the Israeli election.

Arafat sees the game played by the Syrian dictator, Hafiz al-Assad, as being very different from that played by the Iranians, though they both manipulate Hezbollah. "Do you know that I have known Assad since he was a young military officer?" Arafat said. If Peres wins, he predicts, Assad will eventually sign a peace agreement with Israel—"after the election."

THE FOLGER PERAMBULATION

HEADS turned in the beautiful mock-Tudor reading room of the Folger Shakespeare Library on Capitol Hill one day last month. And those who whispered "Is that Salman Rushdie?" were asking the right question. In Washington to address the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Rushdie wanted to pay his respects to the Bard, and the library was happy to arrange a special tour. A devoted student of Shakespeare, Rushdie was shown the Folger quarto edition of "Titus Andronicus," which is the only known surviving copy. As a special treat, the Folger's reference librarian, Georgianna Ziegler, produced a proclamation, signed by Queen Elizabeth herself, attacking the circulation of seditious books in her realm. "Since the books were already out there, she was bolting the stable door after the horse had fled," Ziegler said. "Yes, one knows how she must have felt," Rushdie replied. He is still hoping for a commercial paperback edition of "The Satanic Verses."

The Folger visit occurred within a week of Shakespeare's presumed birthday, April 23rd, which was also the day of the playwright's death, in 1616. Rushdie pointed out during the tour that Cervantes died on the very same day of the very same year. Rushdie excels at what might be termed Shakespeare trivia. Once, in the course of a literary word game, he was challenged to rename a Shakespeare play as if it had been written by Robert Ludlum. He was asked, first, to retitle "Hamlet" in the style of the author of "The Bourne Ultimatum" and "The Scarlatti Inheritance." With no advance notice and almost no hesitation, he said, "The Elsinore Vacillation." A palpable hit but, the other participants thought, sheer luck. Bet you can't do it twice. What about "Macbeth"? "The Dunsinane Deforestation." More meditated offerings included "The Rialto Forfeit," "The Capulet Infatuation," "The Kerchief Implication," and "The Solstice Entrancement."



"I like New York, but it's awfully crowded."

A LEFTY REUNION

BEFORE "Primary Colors," before the Unabomber's manifesto, there was "Report from Iron Mountain," a top-secret document by an anonymous "Special Study Group" brought together during the Kennedy Administration to assess—in the words of the report's subtitle—"the possibility and desirability of peace." Lasting peace is unlikely, it concluded, because war "fills certain functions essential to the stability of our society; until other ways of filling them are developed, the war system must be maintained." As substitutes for war, the report suggested "alternate enemies," such as environmental pollution, fictional extraterrestrials, and state-sanctioned slavery.

The report's 1967 publication, by Dial

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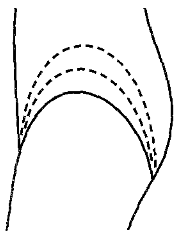

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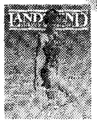

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Press, set off a debate over its findings and frenzied speculation about its authorship. The book was an instant best-seller, but over the years interest subsided, and it eventually went out of print. Then, in the late nineteen-eighties, the incipient militia movement rediscovered "Report from Iron Mountain" and began citing it as evidence of a government conspiracy to restrict individual liberties and impose a United Nations-dominated New World Order.

What the militias didn't comprehend, however, was that "Report from Iron Mountain" was a hoax, a brilliant Strangelovian "modest proposal" hatched by a bunch of New York lefties. Last week, three of those present at the creation of "Report from Iron Mountain"—the novelist E. L. Doctorow, the freelance writer Leonard C. Lewin, and Victor Navasky, the publisher of *The Nation*—celebrated its republication, by the Free Press, over lunch at the Knickerbocker Bar & Grill, and reminisced about an inspired spoof that took on a life of its own.

ONE day in 1966, the staff of *Monocle* (a "radical sporadical" humor magazine edited by Navasky) spied a news item about a dip in the stock market which was attributed to a "peace scare." The staff instantly shifted into satire mode. Navasky contacted Lewin, who agreed to write a suppressed government "report," and Doctorow, then the editor-in-chief of Dial Press, who contracted to publish it.

But, for "Report from Iron Mountain" to succeed, people had to be convinced that it was genuine. Doctorow presented Lewin's perfect rendering of bureaucratic think-tankese to Dial's marketing and sales force as he would any other serious nonfiction book. Lewin devised a foolproof method for evading questions about its origins. "I became an expert in tautology," he recalled. "I'd simply say, 'All I'm permitted to tell you is that it *is* what it *is*.' "

Doctorow said, "While most of the reviews mentioned the possibility that it was a hoax, Leonard had done such a superb job that the book was always poised on the verge of plausibility." John Kenneth Galbraith, who was privy to the deception, vouched for its authenticity in a pseudonymous Washington *Post Book World* review, writing, "My reservations relate only to the wisdom of releasing it to an obviously unconditioned public."

In 1972, Lewin confessed to writing "Report from Iron Mountain," and he thought that the whole caper would be forgotten. When he discovered that right-wing publishers were reprinting the book themselves, he sued for copyright infringement; hundreds of bootleg editions are now lying around his house. "The more Leonard denied that the book was real, the more the right-wing conspiracy theorists thought he was part of the government plot to cover it up," Navasky said with a chuckle. As George Eaton, the publisher of the pro-militia *Patriot Report*, told the *Wall Street Journal* last year, "It was an official document done by the will of the President and secreted away so that it wouldn't be released to the public."

Between sips of coffee, the three men noted the irony of a New Left book's being revived by the New Right. "There's a theory in literary criticism which holds that a book can have a meaning entirely different from the one its author intended," Doctorow said. "So, Leonard, I'm afraid you've been deconstructed. How does it feel?"

"Terrible," Lewin moaned, fingering his much misunderstood book. "But, deconstructed or not, I'm not doing any book tours in Montana."

HOPE

What's the use
of something
as unstable
and diffuse as hope—
the almost-twin
of making-do,
the isotope
of going on:
what isn't in
the envelope
just before
it isn't:
the always tabled
righting of the present

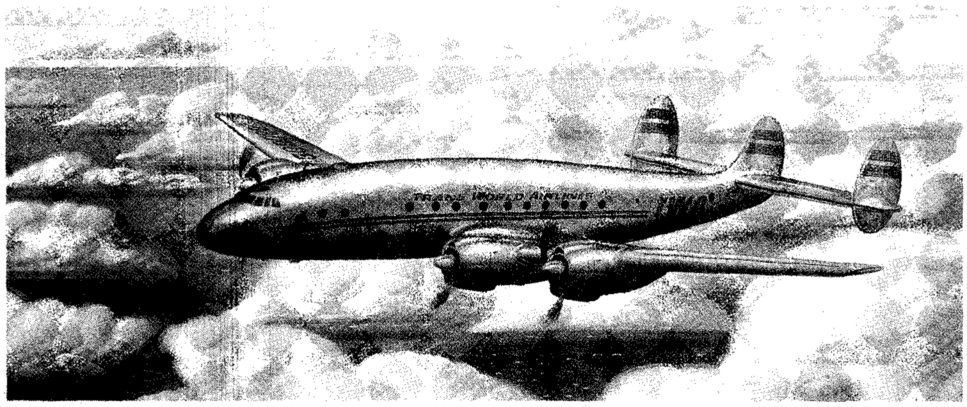
—KAY RYAN

LOOK, LOOK, LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP

HAVE you tried to cross the road inside Central Park lately? Were you run over? Not by a car—by a human? Have you not yet been run over but you're extremely worried about it? Well, you should be. Crossing is risky. And on really nice days it's *impossible.* Once upon a time, you would just stop at the curb and glance in the direction of the traffic, and either the road was empty or perhaps there would be a lone jogger loping along. You didn't even need to calculate when to cross—you just ambled over to the other side. Now everything's different. For instance, there's no such thing anymore as a lone jogger—these days, runners come in herds. Some of them are greyhounds who pass in a blur, and some are wide, waxy-legged, panting newcomers who trudge. How do you cross *now*? How do you calculate, faced with chaos? Do you sprint to beat all of them, or let the speedy ones pass and then dash in front of the fat guys? Oh, and how about if mixed among them is that sleek woman pushing a double-wide-for-twins baby jogger? Not only is she fast—she's got a weapon! So you wait. But as soon as the babymobile passes and you step off the curb, you're in the path of a dozen Lycra sausages perched on racing bikes, who are going so fast that they have windburn. What now? And how do you gauge it if they're followed by a wave of the world's most dangerous traffic—rollerbladers? Of whom there are both the teetering kind, who travel in groups of three and are usually shrieking, "Wow, I'm, like, getting the hang of this! Tiffany! How do I look, I mean, hair-wise? Oh, maybe now I should, like, try to learn how to stop!" and the full-speed-assault model, usually a fifteen-year-old male wearing headphones and an "I EAT ROADKILL" T-shirt. And alongside them is a dog walker who fills one unit of space and whose basset hound fills another—seemingly innocent, a gentle pair in this scene of mayhem, a cinch to cross before or behind, your choice, except, as soon as you choose, the hound wanders, stretching between itself and its master a nearly invisible filament of leash, well below your radar. Very clever. Down you go, right in front of a guy pushing his pretzel cart to a better spot in the Park. Or maybe a skateboarder doing frontside kickflips.

Then again, you could just stay home. ♦

"Martyrdom Complex," Murray Sayle; "Arafat, the Pundit," Sidney Blumenthal; "The Folger Perambulation," Carol Blue; "A Lefty Reunion," Robert S. Boynton; "Look, Look, Look Before You Leap," Susan Orlean.



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SIFTING THE ASHES

Confessions of a conscientious objector in the cigarette wars.

BY JONATHAN FRANZEN

CIGARETTES are the last thing in the world I want to think about. I don't consider myself a smoker, don't identify with the forty-six million Americans who have the habit. I dislike the smell of smoke and the invasion of nasal privacy it represents. Bars and restaurants with a stylish profile—with a clientele whose exclusivity depends in part on the toxic clouds with which it shields itself—have started to disgust me. I've been gassed in hotel rooms where smokers stayed the night before and in public bathrooms where men use the nasty, body-odorish Winston as a laxative. ("Winston tastes bad / Like the one I just had" runs the grammatically unimpeachable parody from my childhood.) Some days in New York it seems as if two-thirds of the people on the sidewalk, in the swirls of car exhaust, are carrying lighted cigarettes; I maneuver constantly to stay upwind. The first casino I ever went to, in Nevada, was a vision of damnation: row upon row of middle-aged women with foot-long faces puffing on foot-long Kents and compulsively feeding silver dollars to the slots. When someone tells me that cigarettes are sexy, I think of Nevada. When I see an actress or an actor drag deeply in a movie, I imagine the pyrenes and phenols ravaging the tender epithelial cells and hardworking cilia of their bronchi, the carbon monoxide and cyanide binding to their hemoglobin, the heaving and straining of their chemically panicked hearts. Cigarettes are a distillation of a more general paranoia that besets our culture, the awful knowledge of our bodies' fragility in a world of molecular hazards. They scare the hell out of me.

Because I'm capable of hating almost every attribute of cigarettes (let's not even talk about cigars), and because I smoked what I believed was my last cigarette five years ago and have never owned an ashtray, it's easy for me to think of myself as nicotine-free. But if the man who bears my name is not a smoker, then why is there again a box fan for exhaust purposes in his living-room window? Why at the end of every workday is there a small collection of cigarette butts in the saucer on the table by this fan?

Cigarettes were the ultimate taboo in the culturally conservative household I grew up in—more fraught, even, than sex or drugs. The year before I was born, my mother's father died of lung cancer. He'd taken up cigarettes as a soldier in the First World War and smoked heavily all his life. Everyone who met my grandfather seems to have loved him, and, much as I may sneer at our country's obsession with health—at the elevation of fitness to godliness and of sheer longevity to a mark of divine favor—the fact remains that if my grandfather hadn't smoked I might have had the chance to know him.

My mother still speaks of cigarettes with loathing. I secretly started smoking them myself in college, perhaps in part because she hated them, and as the years went by I developed a fear of exposure very similar, I'm convinced, to a gay man's fear of coming out to his parents. My mother had created my body out of hers, after all. What rejection of parentage could be more extreme than deliberately poisoning that body? To come out is to announce: this is who I am, this is my identity. The curious thing about "smoker" as a label of identity, though, is its mutability. I could decide tomorrow not to be one anymore. So why not pretend not to be one today? To take control of their lives, people tell themselves stories about the person they want to be. It's the special privilege of the smoker, who at times feels so strongly the resolve to quit that it's as if he'd quit already, to be given irrefutable evidence that these stories aren't necessarily true: here are the butts in the ashtray, here is the smell in the hair.

As a smoker, then, I've come to distrust not only my stories about myself but *all* narratives that pretend to unambiguous moral significance. And it happens that in recent months Americans have been subjected to just such a narrative in the daily press, as "secret" documents shed light on the machinations of Big Tobacco, industry scientists step forward to indict their former employers, nine states and a consortium of sixty law firms launch massive liability suits, and the Food and Drug Administration undertakes to regulate cigarettes as nicotine-delivery devices. The prevailing liberal view that Big Tobacco is Evil with a capital "E" is summed up in the *Times*' review of Richard Kluger's excellent new history of the tobacco industry, "Ashes to Ashes." Chiding Kluger for (of all things) his "objectivity" and "impartiality," Christopher Lehmann-Haupt suggests that the cigarette business is on a moral par with slavery and the Holocaust. Kluger himself, impartial or not, repeatedly links the word "angels" with anti-smoking activists. In the introduction to his book he offers a stark pair of options: either cigarette manufacturers are "businessmen basically like any other" or they're "moral lepers preying on the ignorant, the miserable, the emotionally vulnerable, and the genetically susceptible."

My discomfort with these dichotomies may reflect the fact that, unlike Lehmann-Haupt, I have yet to kick the habit. But in no national debate do I feel more out of synch with the mainstream. For all that I distrust American industry, and especially an industry that is vigorously engaged in buying congressmen, some part of me insists on rooting for tobacco. I flinch as I force myself to read the latest health news: SMOKERS MORE LIKELY TO BEAR RETARDED BABIES, STUDY SAYS. I pounce on particularly choice collisions of metaphor and melodrama, such as this one from the *Times:* "The affidavits are the latest in a string of blows that have undermined the air of invincibility that once cloaked the $45 billion tobacco industry, which faces a deluge of lawsuits." My sympathy with cohorts who smoke disproportionately—blue-collar workers, African-Americans, writers and artists, alienated teens, the mentally ill—expands to include the companies that supply them with cigarettes. I think, We're all underdogs now. Wartime is a time of lies, I tell myself, and the biggest lie of the cigarette wars is that the moral equation can be reduced to ones and zeroes. Or have I, too, been corrupted by the weed?

There's no simple, universal reason that people smoke, but of one thing I'm convinced: they don't do it because they're slaves to nicotine.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MAN RAY/THE J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM, © 1996 ARTIST RIGHTS SOCIETY, N.Y./MAN RAY TRUST/ADAGP, PARIS

I TOOK up smoking as a student in Germany in the dark years of the early eighties. Ronald Reagan had recently made his "evil empire" speech, and Jonathan Schell was publishing "The Fate of the Earth." The word in Berlin was that if you woke up to an undestroyed world on Saturday morning you were safe for another week; the assumption was that NATO was at its sleepiest late on Friday nights, that Warsaw Pact forces would choose those hours to come pouring through the Fulda Gap, and that NATO would have to go ballistic to repel them. Since I rated my chances of surviving the decade at fifty-fifty, the additional risk posed by smoking seemed negligible. Indeed, there was something invitingly apocalyptic about cigarettes. The nightmare of nuclear proliferation had a counterpart in the way cigarettes—anonymous, death-bearing, missilelike cylinders—proliferated in my life. Cigarettes are a fixture of modern warfare, the soldier's best friend, and, at a time when a likely theatre of war was my own living room, smoking became a symbol of my helpless civilian participation in the Cold War.

Among the anxieties best suited to containment by cigarettes is, paradoxically, the fear of dying. What serious smoker hasn't felt the surge of panic at the thought of lung cancer and immediately lighted up to beat the panic down? (It's a Cold War logic: we're afraid of nuclear weapons, so let's build even more of them.) Death is a severing of the connection between self and world, and, since the self can't imagine not existing, perhaps what's really scary about the prospect of dying is not the extinguishment of my consciousness but the extinguishment of the world. The potential deadliness of cigarettes was comforting because it allowed me, in effect, to become familiar with apocalypse, to acquaint myself with the contours of its terrors, to make the world's potential death less strange and so a little less threatening. Time stops for the duration of a cigarette: when you're smoking, you're acutely present to yourself; you step outside the unconscious forward rush of life. This is why the condemned are allowed a final cigarette, this is why (or so the story goes) gentlemen in evening dress stood puffing at the rail as the Titanic went down: it's a lot easier to leave the world if you're certain you've really been in it. As Goethe writes in "Faust," "Presence is our duty, be it only a moment."

The cigarette is famously the herald of the modern, the boon companion of

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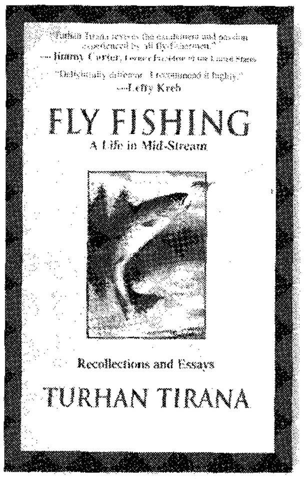

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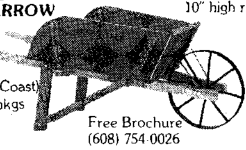

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industrial capitalism and high-density urbanism. Crowds, hyperkinesis, mass production, numbingly boring labor, and social upheaval all have correlatives in the cigarette. The sheer number of individual units consumed surely dwarfs that of any other manufactured consumer product. "Short, snappy, easily attempted, easily completed or just as easily discarded before completion," the *Times* wrote in a 1925 editorial that Richard Kluger quotes, "the cigarette is the symbol of a machine age in which the ultimate cogs and wheels and levers are human nerves." Itself the product of a mechanical roller called the Bonsack machine, the cigarette served as an opiate for assembly-line workers, breaking up into manageable units long days of grinding sameness. For women, the *Atlantic Monthly* noted in 1916, the cigarette was "the symbol of emancipation, the temporary substitute for the ballot." Altogether, it's impossible to imagine the twentieth century without cigarettes. They show up with Zelig-like ubiquity in old photographs and newsreels, so devoid of individuality as to be hardly noticeable and yet, once noticed, utterly strange.

Kluger's history of the cigarette business reads like a history of American business in general. An industry that in the early eighteen-eighties was splintered into hundreds of small, family-owned concerns had by the turn of the century come under the control of one man, James Buchanan Duke, who by pioneering the use of the Bonsack roller and reinvesting a huge portion of his revenues in advertising, and then by alternately employing the stick of price wars and the carrot of attractive buy-out offers, built his American Tobacco Company into the equivalent of Standard Oil or Carnegie Steel. Like his fellow-monopolists, Duke eventually ran afoul of the trust-busters, and in 1911 the Supreme Court ordered the breakup of American. The resulting oligopoly immediately brought out new brands—Camel, Lucky Strike, and Chesterfield—that have vied for market share ever since. To American retailers, the cigarette was the perfect commodity, a staple that generated large profits on a small investment in shelf space and inventory; cigarettes, Kluger notes, "were lightweight and durably packed, rarely spoiled, were hard to steal since they were usually sold from behind the counter, underwent few price changes, and required almost no selling effort."

Since every brand tasted pretty much the same, tobacco companies learned early to situate themselves at the cutting edge of advertising. In the twenties, American Tobacco offered five free cartons of Lucky Strike ("it's toasted") to any doctor who would endorse it, and then launched a campaign that claimed, "20,679 Physicians Say Luckies Are Less Irritating"; American was also the first company to target weight-conscious women ("When tempted to over-indulge, reach for a Lucky instead"). The industry pioneered the celebrity endorsement (the tennis star Bill Tilden: "I've smoked Camels for years, and I never tire of their smooth, rich taste"), radio sponsorship (Arthur Godfrey: "I smoked two or three packs of these things [Chesterfields] every day—I feel pretty good"), assaultive outdoor advertising (the most famous was the "I'd Walk a Mile for a Camel" billboard in Times Square, which for twenty-five years blew giant smoke rings), and, finally, the sponsorship of television shows like "Candid Camera" and "I Love Lucy." The brilliant TV commercials made for Philip Morris—Benson & Hedges smokers whose hundred-millimetre cigarettes were crushed by elevator doors; faux-hand-cranked footage of chambermaids sneaking smokes to the tune of "You've got your own cigarette now, baby"—were vital entertainments of my childhood. I remember, too, the chanted words "Silva Thins, Silva Thins," the mantra for a short-lived American Tobacco product that wooed the female demographic with such appalling copy as "Cigarettes are like girls, the best ones are thin and rich."

The most successful campaign of all, of course, was for Marlboro, an upscale cigarette for ladies which Philip Morris reintroduced in 1954 in a filtered version for the mainstream. Like all modern products, the new Marlboro was designed with great care. The tobacco blend was strengthened so as to survive the muting of a filter, the "flip-top" box was introduced to the national vocabulary, the color red was chosen to signal strong flavor, and the graphics underwent endless tinkering before the final look, including a fake heraldic crest with the motto "*Veni, vidi, vici*," was settled on; there was even market-testing in four cities to decide the color of the filter. It was in Leo Burnett's ad campaign for Marlboro, however, that the real genius lay. The key to its success was its transparency. Place a lone ranch hand against a backdrop of buttes at sunset, and just about every positive association a cigarette can carry is in the picture: rugged individualism, masculine sexuality, escape from an urban modernity, strong flavors, the living of life intensely. The Marlboro marks our commercial culture's passage from an age of promises to an age of pleasant empty dreams.

It's no great surprise that a company smart enough to advertise as well as this ascended, in just three decades, to a position of hegemony in the industry. Kluger's account of the triumph of Philip Morris is the kind of thing that business schools have their students read for edification and inspiration: to succeed as an American corporation, the lesson might be, do exactly what Philip Morris did. Concentrate on products with the highest profit margin. Design new products carefully, then get behind them and push *hard*. Use your excess cash to diversify into businesses that are structurally similar to your own. Be a meritocracy. Avoid crippling debt. Patiently build your overseas markets. Never scruple to gouge your customers when you see the opportunity. Let your lawyers attack your critics. Be classy—sponsor "The Mahabharata." Defy conventional morality. Never forget that your primary fealty is to your stockholders.

While its chief competitor, R. J. Reynolds, was growing logy and inbred down in Winston-Salem—sinking into the low-margin discount-cigarette business, diversifying disastrously, and nearly drowning in debt after its leveraged buyout by Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Company—Philip Morris was becoming the global leader in the cigarette industry and one of the most profitable corporations in the world. By the early nineties, its share of the domestic nondiscount-cigarette market had risen to eighty per cent. One share of Philip Morris stock bought in 1966 was worth a hundred and ninety-two shares in 1989 dollars. Healthy, wealthy, and wise the man who quit smoking in '64 and put his cigarette money into Philip Morris common.

The company's spectacular success is all the more remarkable for having occurred in the decades when the scientific case against cigarettes was becoming overwhelming. With the possible exception of the hydrogen bomb, nothing in modernity is more generative of paradox than cigarettes. Thus, in 1955, when the Federal Trade Commission sought to curb misleading advertising by banning the publication of tar and nicotine levels, the ruling proved to be a boon to the industry, by enabling it to advertise filter cigarettes for their implicit safety even as it raised the toxic yields to compensate for the filters. So it went with the 1965 law requiring warning labels on cigarette packs, which preëmpted potentially more stringent state and local regulations and provided a priceless shield against future liability suits. So it went, too, with the 1971 congressional ban on broadcast cigarette advertising, which saved the industry millions of dollars, effectively froze out potential new competitors by denying them the broadcast platform, and put an end to the devastating anti-smoking ads then being broadcast under the fairness doctrine. Even such left-handed regulation as the 1982 increase in the federal excise tax benefitted the industry, which used the tax as a screen for a series of price increases, doubling the price per pack in a decade, and invested the windfall in diversification. Every forward step taken by government to regulate smoking—the broadcast ban, the ban on in-flight smoking, the welter of local bans on smoking in public places—has moved cigarettes a step further back from the consciousness of nonsmoking voters. The result, given the political power of tobacco-growing states, has been the specific exemption of cigarettes from the Fair Labelling and Packaging Act of 1966, the Controlled Substances Act of 1970, the Consumer Product Safety Act of 1972, and the Toxic Substances Act of 1976. In the industry's defense in liability suits, the paradox can be seen in its purest form: because no plaintiff can claim ignorance of tobacco's hazards—i.e., precisely *because* the cigarette is the

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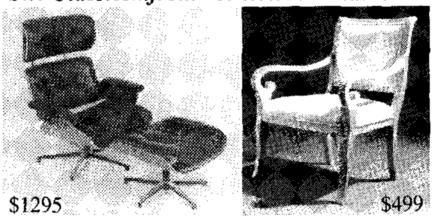

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—KATHARINE ANNE PORTER
(1890-1980)

most notoriously lethal product in America—its manufacturers cannot be held negligent for selling it. Small wonder that until the Liggett Group broke ranks this spring no cigarette maker had ever paid a penny in civil damages.

Now, however, the age of paradox may be coming to an end. As the nation dismantles its missiles, its attention turns to cigarettes. The wall of secrecy that protected the industry is coming down as surely as the Berlin Wall did. The Third Wave is upon us, threatening to extinguish all that is quintessentially modern. It hardly seems an accident that the United States, which is leading the way into the information age, is also in the forefront of the war on cigarettes. Unlike the nations of Europe, which have taken a more pragmatic approach to the smoking problem, taxing cigarettes at rates as high as five dollars a pack, the anti-smoking forces in this country bring to the battle a puritanical zeal. We need a new Evil Empire, and Big Tobacco fills the bill.

THE argument for equating the tobacco industry with slave traders and the Third Reich goes like this: because nearly half a million Americans a year die prematurely as a direct consequence of smoking, the makers of cigarettes are guilty of mass murder. The obvious difficulty with the argument is that the tobacco industry has never physically forced anyone to smoke a cigarette. To speak of its "killing" people, therefore, one has to posit more subtle forms of coercion. These fall into three categories. First, by publicly denying a truth well known to its scientists, which was that smokers were in mortal peril, the industry conspired to perpetrate a vast and deadly fraud. Second, by luring impressionable children into a habit very difficult to break, the industry effectively "forced" its products on people before they had developed full adult powers of resistance. Finally, by making available and attractive a product that it knew to be addictive, and by manipulating nicotine levels, the industry willfully exposed the public to a force (addiction) with the power to kill.

A "shocking" collection of "secret" industry documents which was express-mailed by a disgruntled employee of Brown & Williamson to the anti-smoking crusader Stanton A. Glantz, and has now been published by the University of California Press as "The Cigarette Papers," makes it clear that Big Tobacco has known for decades that cigarettes are lethal and addictive and has done everything in its power to suppress and deny that knowledge. "The Cigarette Papers" and other recent disclosures have prompted the Justice Department to pursue perjury charges against various industry executives, and may provide the plaintiffs now suing the industry with positive proof of tortious fraud. In no way, though, are the disclosures shocking. How could anyone who noticed that different cigarette brands have different (but consistent) nicotine levels fail to conclude that the industry can and does control the dosage? What reasonable person could have believed that the industry's public avowals of "doubt" about the deadliness of its products were anything but obligatory, ceremonial lies? If researchers unearthed a secret document proving that Bill Clinton inhaled, would we be shocked? When industry spokesmen impugn the integrity of the Surgeon General and persist in denying the undeniable, they're guilty not so much of fraud as of sounding (to borrow the word of one executive quoted by Kluger) "Neanderthal."

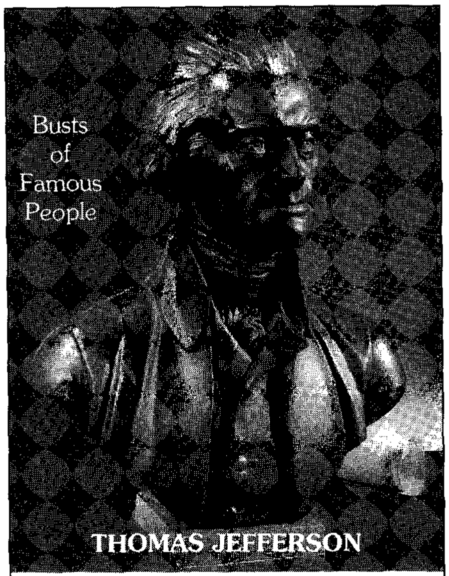
"The simple truth," Kluger writes, "was that the cigarette makers were getting richer and richer as the scientific findings against them piled higher and higher, and before anyone fully grasped the situation, the choice seemed to have narrowed to abject confession and surrender to the health advocates or steadfast denial and rationalization." In the early fifties, when epidemiological studies first demonstrated the link between smoking and lung cancer, cigarette executives did indeed have the option of simply liquidating their businesses and finding other work. But many of these executives came from families that had been respectably trading in tobacco for decades, and most of them appear to have been heavy smokers themselves: unlike the typical heroin wholesaler, they willingly ran the same risks they imposed on their customers. Because they were corporate officers, moreover, their ultimate allegiance was to their stockholders. If having simply stayed in business constitutes guilt, then the circle of those who share this guilt must be expanded to include every individual who held stock in a tobacco company after 1964, either directly or through a pension fund, a mutual fund, or a university endowment. We might also toss in every drugstore and supermarket that sold cigarettes and every publication that carried ads for them, since the Surgeon General's warning, after all, was there for everyone to see.

Once the companies made the decision to stay in business, it was only a matter of time before the lawyers took over. Nothing emerges from "Ashes to Ashes" more clearly than the deforming influence of legal counsel on the actions of the industry. Many industry scientists and some executives appear to have genuinely wished both to produce a safer cigarette and to acknowledge frankly the known risks of smoking. But the industry's attempts to do good were no less paradoxically self-defeating than the government's attempts at regulation. When executives in R. & D. proposed that filtered cigarettes and reduced tar and nicotine yields be marketed as a potential benefit to public health, in-house lawyers objected that calling one brand "safe" or "safer" constituted an admission that other brands were hazardous and thus exposed the maker to liability claims. Likewise, after Liggett had spent millions of dollars developing a substantially less carcinogenic "palladium cigarette" in the seventies, it was treated like contagion by the company's lawyers. Marketing it was bad from a liability standpoint, and developing it and then not marketing it was even worse, because in that case the company could be sued for negligently failing to introduce it. Epic, as the new cigarette was called, was ultimately smothered in legal paper.

Kluger describes an industry in which lawyerly paranoia quickly metastasized into every vital organ. Lawyers coached the executives appearing before congressional committees, oversaw the woefully self-serving "independent" research that the industry sponsored, and made sure that all paperwork connected with studies of addiction or cancer was funnelled through outside counsel so that it could be protected under the attorney-client privilege. The result was a weird replication of the dual contradictory narratives with which I, as a smoker, explain my life: a true story submerged beneath a utilitarian fiction. One longtime Philip Morris executive quoted by Kluger sums it up like this:

> There was a conflict in the company between science and the law that's never been resolved . . . and so we go through this ritual dance—what's "proven" and what isn't, what's causal and what's just an association—and the lawyers' answer is, "Let's stonewall." . . . If Helmut Wakeham [head of R. & D.] had run things, I think there would have been some admissions. But he was outflanked by the lawyers . . . who . . . were saying, in effect, "My God, you can't make that admission" without risking liability actions against the company. So there was no cohesive plan—when critics of the industry speak of a "conspiracy," they give the companies far too much credit.

In the inverted moral universe of a tobacco-liability trial, every honest or



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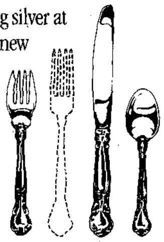

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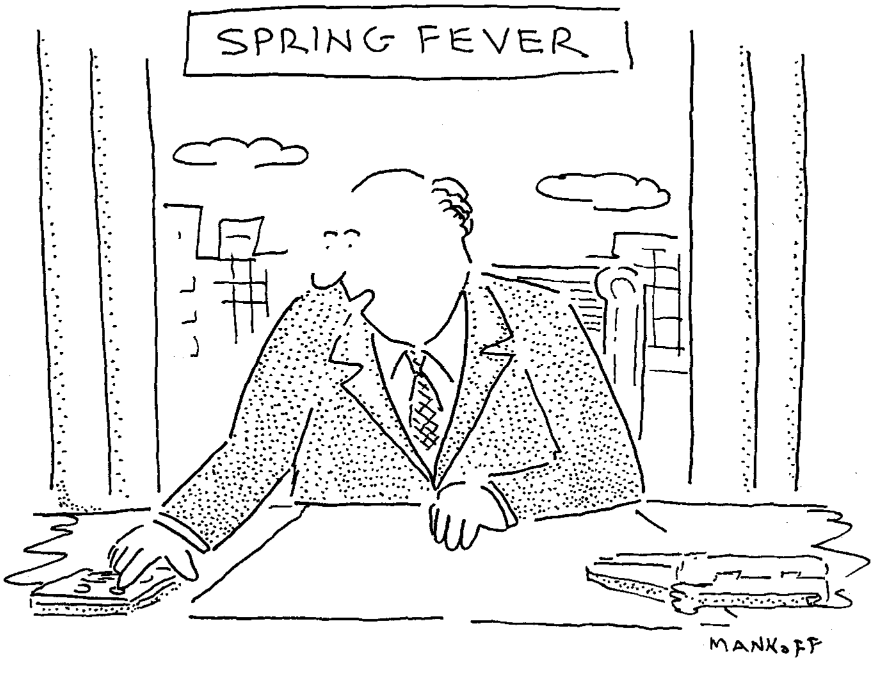
anguished statement by an executive is used to prove the defendants' guilt, while every calculated dodge is used to support their innocence. There's something very wrong here; but absent a demonstration that Americans actually swallowed the industry's lies it's far from clear that this something qualifies as murder.

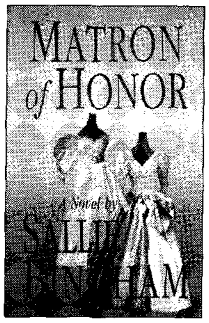
More damning are recent reports of the industry's recruitment of underage smokers. Lorillard representatives have been observed handing out free Newports to kids in Washington, D.C.; Philip J. Hilts, in his new book, "Smokescreen," presents evidence that R. J. Reynolds deliberately placed special promotional displays in stores and kiosks known to be high-school hangouts; and the cuddly, penis-faced Joe Camel must rank as one of the most disgusting apparitions ever to appear in our cultural landscape. Tobacco companies claim that they are merely vying for market share in the vital eighteen-to-twenty-four age group, but internal industry documents described by Hilts suggest that at least one Canadian company has in fact studied how to target entry-level smokers as young as twelve. (According to Hilts, studies have shown that eighty-nine per cent of today's adult smokers picked up the habit before the age of nineteen.) In the opinion of anti-tobacco activists, cigarette advertising hooks young customers by proffering images of carefree, attractive adult smokers while failing to hint at the havoc that smoking wreaks. By the time young smokers are old enough to appreciate the fact of mortality, they're hopelessly addicted.

Although the idea that a manufacturer might willingly stress the downside of its products is absurd, I have no doubt that the industry aims its ads at young Americans. I do doubt, though, whether these ads cause an appreciable number of children to start smoking. The insecure or alienated teen who lights up for the first time is responding to peer pressure or to the example of grownup role models—movie villains, rock stars, supermodels. At most, the industry's ads function as an assurance that smoking is a socially acceptable grownup activity. For that reason alone, they should probably be banned or more tightly controlled, just as cigarette-vending machines should be outlawed. Most people who start smoking end up regretting it, so any policy that reduces the number of starters is laudable.

That cigarettes innately appeal to teen-agers, however, is hardly the fault of the manufacturers. In recent weeks, I've noticed several anti-tobacco newspaper ads that offer, evidently for its shock value, the image of a preadoles-



"Ms. Dixon, bring in 'da noise, bring in 'da funk!"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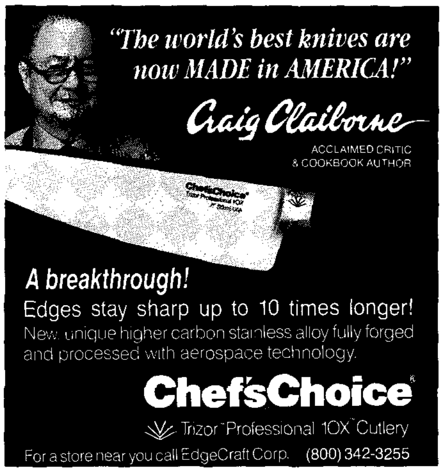
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cent girl holding a cigarette. The models are obviously not real smokers, yet, despite their phoniness, they're utterly sexualized by their cigarettes. The horror of underage smoking veils a horror of teen and preteen sexuality, and one of the biggest pleasant empty dreams being pushed these days by Madison Avenue is that a child is innocent until his or her eighteenth birthday. The truth is that without firm parental guidance teen-agers make all sorts of irrevocable decisions before they're old enough to appreciate the consequences—they drop out of school, they get pregnant, they major in sociology. What they want most of all is to sample the pleasures of adulthood, like sex or booze or cigarettes. To impute to cigarette advertising a "predatory" power is to admit that parents now have less control over the moral education of their children than the commercial culture has. Here, again, I suspect that the tobacco industry is being scapegoated—made to bear the brunt of a more general societal rage at the displacement of the family by the corporation.

The final argument for the moral culpability of Big Tobacco is that addiction is a form of coercion. Nicotine is a toxin whose ingestion causes the smoker's brain to change its chemistry in defense. Once those changes have occurred, the smoker must continue to consume nicotine on a regular schedule in order to maintain the new chemical balance. Tobacco companies are well aware of this, and an attorney cited by Kluger summarizes the legal case for coercion as follows: "You addicted me, and you knew it was addicting, and now you say it's my fault." As Kluger goes on to point out, though, the argument has many flaws. Older even than the common knowledge that smoking causes cancer, for example, is the knowledge that smoking is a tough habit to break. Human tolerance of nicotine varies widely, moreover, and the industry has long offered an array of brands with ultra-low doses. Finally, no addiction is unconquerable: millions of Americans quit every year. When a smoker says he wants to quit but can't, what he's really saying is "I want to quit, but I want even more not to suffer the agony of withdrawal." To argue otherwise is to jettison any lingering notion of personal responsibility.

If nicotine addiction were purely physical, quitting would be relatively easy, because the acute withdrawal symptoms, the physical cravings, rarely last more than a few weeks. At the time I myself quit, six years ago, I was able to stay nicotine-free for weeks at a time, and even when I was working I seldom smoked more than a few ultralights a day. But on the day I decided that the cigarette I'd had the day before was my last, I was absolutely flattened. A month passed in which I was too agitated to read a book, too fuzzy-headed even to focus on a newspaper. If I'd had a job at the time, or a family to take care of, I might have hardly noticed the psychological withdrawal. But as it happened nothing much was going on in my life. "Do you smoke?" Lady Bracknell asks Jack Worthing in "The Importance of Being Earnest," and when he admits that he does she replies, "I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind."

There's no simple, universal reason that people smoke, but of one thing I'm convinced: they don't do it because they're slaves to nicotine. My best guess about my own attraction to the habit is that I belong to a class of people whose lives are insufficiently structured. The mentally ill and the indigent are also members of this class. We embrace a toxin as deadly as nicotine, suspended in an aerosol of hydrocarbons and nitrosamines, because we have not yet found pleasures or routines that can replace the comforting, structure-bringing rhythm of need and gratification that the cigarette habit offers. One word for this structuring might be "self-medication"; another might be "coping." But there are very few serious smokers over thirty, perhaps none at all, who don't feel guilty about the harm they inflict on themselves. Even Rose Cipollone, the New Jersey woman whose heirs in the early eighties nearly sustained a liability judgment against the industry, had to be recruited by an activist. The sixty law firms that have pooled their assets for a class-action suit on behalf of all American smokers do not seem to me substantially less predatory than the

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suit's corporate defendants. I've never met a smoker who blamed the habit on someone else.

The United States as a whole resembles an addicted individual, with the corporate id going about its dirty business while the conflicted political ego frets and dithers. What's clear is that the tobacco industry would not still be flourishing, thirty years after the first Surgeon General's report, if our legislatures weren't purchasable, if the concepts of honor and personal responsibility hadn't largely given way to the power of litigation and the dollar, and if the country didn't generally endorse the idea of corporations whose ultimate responsibility is not to society but to the bottom line. There's no doubt that some tobacco executives have behaved despicably, and for public-health advocates to hate these executives, as the nicotine addict comes eventually to hate his cigarettes, is natural. But to cast them as moral monsters—a point source of evil—is just another form of prime-time entertainment.

BY selling its soul to its legal advisers, Big Tobacco long ago made clear its expectation that the country's smoking problem would eventually be resolved in court. The industry may soon suffer such a devastating loss in a liability suit that thereafter only foreign cigarette makers will be able to afford to do business here. Or perhaps a federal court will undertake to legislate a solution to a problem that the political process has clearly proved itself unequal to, and the Supreme Court will issue an opinion that does for the smoking issue what Brown v. Board of Education did for racial segregation and Roe v. Wade for abortion. "Businessmen are combatants, not healers," Kluger writes in "Ashes to Ashes," "and when they press against or exceed the bounds of decency in their quest for gain, unhesitant to profit from the folly of others, should the exploited clientele and victimized society expect the perpetrators to restrain themselves out of some sudden divine visitation of conscience? Or must human nature be forcibly corrected when it goes awry?"

Liggett's recent defection notwithstanding, the Medicare suits filed by nine states seem unlikely to succeed as a forcible correction. Kluger notes that these cases arguably amount to "personal injury claims in disguise," and that the Supreme Court has ruled that federal cigarette-labelling laws are an effective shield against such claims. Logically, in other words, the states ought to be suing smokers, not cigarette makers. And perhaps smokers, in turn, ought to be suing Social Security and private pension funds for all the money they'll save by dying early. The best estimates of the nationwide dollar "cost" of smoking, including savings from premature death and income from excise taxes, are negative numbers. If the country's health is to be measured fiscally, an economist quoted by Kluger jokes, "cigarette smoking should be subsidized rather than taxed."

The giant class-action suit filed in New Orleans in March of 1994 represents a more serious threat to Big Tobacco. If a judge concludes that smoking constitutes a social ill on a par with racial segregation, he or she is unlikely to deny standing to the forty-six-million-member "class" represented by the consortium of law firms, and once plaintiffs in a class-action suit are granted standing they almost never lose. The case for regulation of tobacco by the F.D.A. is likewise excellent. The modern cigarette is a heavily engineered product, bolstered with a long list of additives, and its nicotine content is manipulable at will. Tobacco companies insist that cigarettes, because no health claims are made for them by the companies, should not be considered a drug. But if nicotine is universally understood to be habit-forming—a central tenet of the industry's liability defense—then the absence of explicit health claims is meaningless. Whether Congress, in its various wafflings, intended cigarettes to be immune from F.D.A. regulation in the first place is, again, a matter that will be decided in court, but a demonstrable history of lies and distortion is sure to weaken the industry's defense.

Ultimately, the belief that the country's century-long love affair with the cigarette can be ended rationally and amicably seems as fond as the belief that there's a painless way to kick nicotine. The first time I quit, I stayed clean for nearly three years. I found I was able to work *more* productively without the distraction and cumulative unpleasantness of cigarettes, and I was happy finally to be the nonsmoker that my family had always taken me to be. Eventually, though, in a season of great personal loss, I came to resent having quit for other people rather than for myself. I was hanging out with smokers, and I drifted back into the habit. Smoking may not look sexy to me anymore, but it still *feels* sexy. The pleasure of carrying the drug, of surrendering to its imperatives and relaxing behind a veil of smoke, is thoroughly licentious. If longevity were the highest good that I could imagine, I might succeed now in scaring myself into quitting. But to the fatalist who values the present more than the future the nagging voice of conscience—of society, of family—becomes just another factor in the mental equilibrium that sustains the habit. "Perhaps," Richard Klein writes in "Cigarettes Are Sublime," "one stops smoking only when one starts to love cigarettes, becoming so enamored of their charms and so grateful for their benefits that one at last begins to grasp how much is lost by giving them up, how urgent it is to find substitutes for some of the seductions and powers that cigarettes so magnificently combine." To live with uncontaminated lungs and an unracing heart is a pleasure that I hope someday soon to prefer to the pleasure of a cigarette. For myself, then, I'm cautiously optimistic. For the body politic, rhetorically torn between shrill condemnation and Neanderthal denial, and habituated to the poison of tobacco money in its legal system, its legislatures, its financial markets, and its balance of foreign trade, I'm considerably less so.

A few weeks ago in Tribeca, in a Magritte-like twilight, I saw a woman in a lighted window on a high floor of a loft apartment building. She was standing on a chair and lowering the window's upper sash. She tossed her hair and did something complicated with her arms which I recognized as the lighting of a cigarette. Then she leaned her elbow and her chin on the sash and blew smoke into the humid air outside. I fell in love at first sight as she stood there, both inside and outside, inhaling contradiction and breathing out ambivalence. ♦

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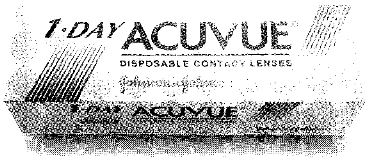

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ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

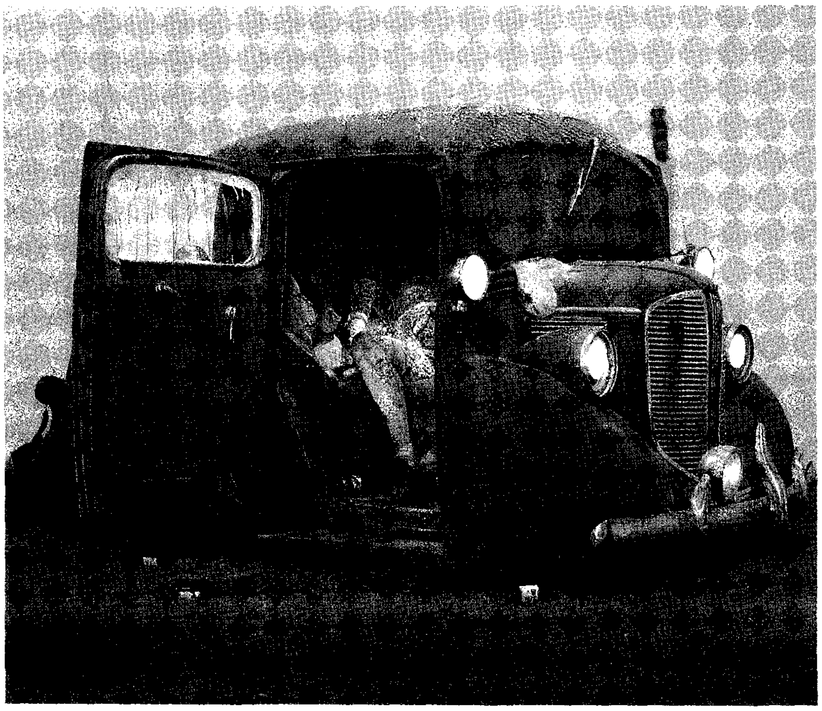
CARS AND CARCASSES

The last word on Ed Kienholz.

BY LAWRENCE WESCHLER

THE offending vehicle now seems almost pastoral in its fumbling innocence—the squat blue Dodge, with its feverishly groping inhabitants, who almost got the Los Angeles County Museum of Art shut down, thirty years ago this spring, on the eve of Edward Kienholz's first career retrospective. (A new retrospective, only his second in America, recently opened at the Whitney. It will remain there until June 2nd, at which point it will move to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, ending up, early next year, at the Berlinische Galerie.) The artist was thirty-eight at the time the Dodge went on show. It lay sedately splayed on a beer-bottle-strewn fake-grass pad, its windows meshed over, cheap radio music wafting from its closed interior. If you were drawn, in spite of yourself, to open the door, as you were clearly meant to be, you were suddenly confronted with a young couple in a rictus clench, the boy (ghostly, transparent, fashioned, as it happened, out of chicken wire) struggling to yank the panties from the girl's more substantial, spread legs, she struggling either to resist or to accommodate him, or maybe both. Leaning in farther, you might have noticed how in that moment of urgent passion their two heads had melded into one. And just beyond and above that you might have noticed a leering voyeur, peering clammily through the far door's window: your very self (as you'd suddenly realize), cannily mirrored.

The L.A. County supervisor Warren Dorn clearly did not like what he saw—or, perhaps, liked it all too well. The gubernatorial primaries were fast approaching, and the veteran politico had resolved to launch his candidacy by prodding his fellow-supervisors into a lather of righteousness over the art world's depraved moral standards as these were evinced by



"Back Seat Dodge '38" (1964), now at the Whitney show. Being somebody's hunk of meat was Kienholz's idea of romance.

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the Dodge and other such pieces in the impending show, notably a room-size tableau called "Roxys," a surrealistic evocation of the seedy wartime parlor of a Nevada bordello. "My wife Phyllis knows art," Supervisor Dorn intoned at a news conference. "I know pornography." He issued a slew of ultimatums to the museum's trustees and then, for good measure, had himself photographed resolutely slamming shut the door of the offending car.

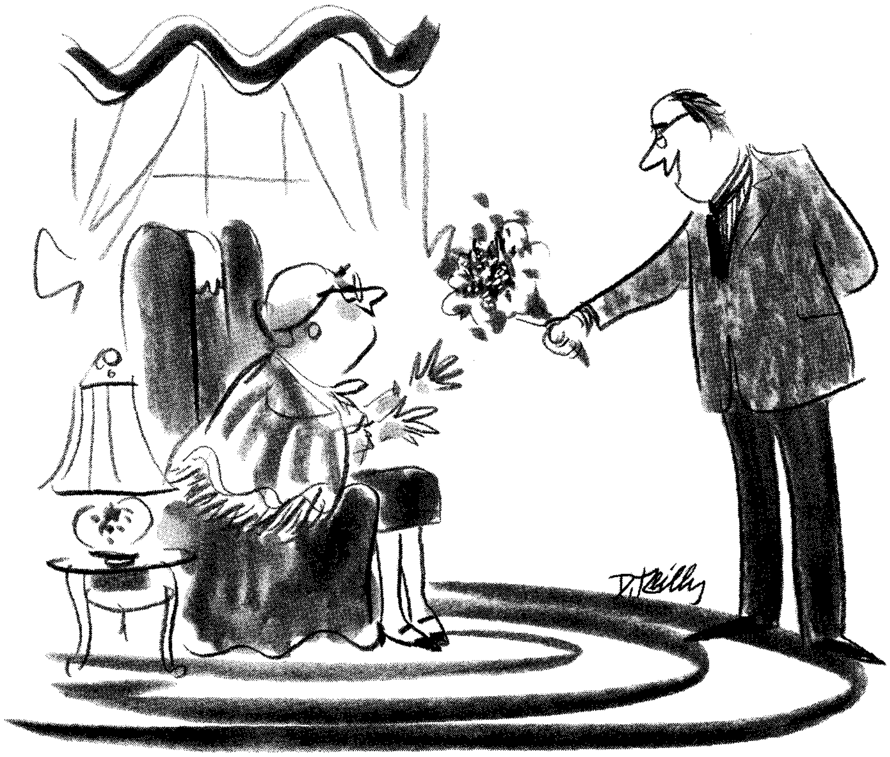
He hadn't been counting on the artist himself, however, who turned out to be quite a serious (if devilishly ironic) moralist in his own right: a solid public citizen, goateed but otherwise clean-cut, and the loving single father of two small children to boot. Dorn never had a chance. Such was the velocity with which the times were then a-changin' that the supervisors quickly became laughingstocks. The exhibit opened on schedule, virtually without concessions. Dorn's candidacy went down in flames, and instead the Republicans chose a political novice—an actor named Ronald Reagan.

TODAY, as "Back Seat Dodge '38" presides demurely over a basement alcove at the Whitney, the door flung wide open to all passersby, it's hard to see what the fuss was about—especially when you compare that work with some of the things Kienholz and his wife, Nancy, perpetrated in more recent years. Ed met Nancy Reddin six years after the infamous LACMA show, and the fact that she happened to be the only daughter of Tom Reddin, the chief of the Los Angeles Police Department, must have added a certain piquancy to the attraction, probably on both sides. In 1981, in public recognition of the remarkable way in which their lives had become entwined, Ed announced that thenceforth they would co-sign all the work emerging from the Kienholz studio, and that, for that matter, all the work dating back to their initial meeting, in 1972, was to be considered retroactively co-signed.

Some critics point to a certain softening in Kienholz's fiercely distinctive production in the years after he met Nancy—her influence? the fact of his growing personal satisfaction?—yet that premise is hard to sustain, for some of the late works are as viscerally discomfiting as anything that preceded them. Take "All Have Sinned in Rm. 323," one of the final pieces on the Whitney retrospective's third floor—the floor given over to the years of Ed and Nancy's collaboration. Simply put, what we have here is a lovely, solitary mannequin, her ratty easy chair scrunched up close to a flickering TV set, her bathrobe falling open at her shoulders, and her naked legs straddling the set as she flagrantly masturbates. On top of the set and along the wall behind it are a myriad Bibles, images of Jesus, and a large portrait of a lachrymose Tammy Faye Bakker. The title of the piece derives from a tattered sign that Kienholz once passed on the road between Salton Sea and L.A., which actually referred not to Room 323 but, rather, to Romans 3:23: "For all alike have sinned, and are deprived of the divine splendor."

Kienholz's own notoriously militant "areligiousness" (his word) notwithstanding, the piece is deliciously ambiguous. Is it about the woman's abject loneliness or about her momentary flooding into splendor? Is it about the prurient way the media, and particularly the televangelical media, keep getting off on the endlessly enticing prospect of human wickedness? Is it about the way Kienholz himself, nearing the end of his career, had to relentlessly ratchet up his own righteous indignation at the prospect of such blatant hypocrisy? Who knows? The point is that, lying there spread-eagled, "Rm. 323" is this show's "Back Seat Dodge" scandal just waiting to happen: "Paging Dr. Gingrich, paging Dr. Dole, your presence is urgently requested on the Whitney's third floor."

Nancy Reddin Kienholz and the show's superb guest curator, Walter Hopps (Ed's longtime friend), seem aware of that possibility. Right next to "Rm. 323" they've placed another recent piece, "My Country Tis of Thee," comprising a roundelay of four marching politicians, suited from the waist up (each with a little flag in one hand, clutched over his heart) and naked from the waist down, each with his right leg firmly planted in a pork barrel and his other hand reaching back to grab the drooping member of the marcher immediately behind. Indeed, that entire corner of the current installation is



"To my favorite palindrome."

• •

like a Venus's-flytrap, just waiting for some latter-day Supervisor Dorn to come stumbling in.

I FIRST met Kienholz in the middle nineteen-seventies, ten years after the LACMA show. I'd been dispatched to northern Idaho, where Ed and Nancy then lived on a half-yearly basis, by the U.C.L.A. Oral History Program, which at the time was compiling what it called a "Group Portrait" of the L.A. art scene. Ed, having established himself as almost a defining feature of that scene for more than fifteen years, had pulled up his Southern California stakes in 1973. He said he didn't want his kids, who were then approaching puberty, exposed to the city's lax moral environment.

Ed was six feet tall, though he seemed short, waddling about almost daintily, and merrily heaving a medicine ball of a belly before him. It was summer, and he usually went unclothed except for a pair of shorts or even just underpants; seated skeptically for our interview sessions, he'd fold his softly sloping (yet astonishingly powerful) arms over the top of that bare belly as if it were a conveniently portable desk. He was by turns amused, bemused, and exasperated by the forced march of recollection: he loved to taunt and test me. ("I'm bored," he declared at one point. "Let's go hunting." Or, "Ever been waterskiing? No? Let's all go see what Weschler looks like trailing behind a speedboat.") Often, the interview sessions bogged down altogether—"You want that story? It's a good one. What'll you give me for it?"—in increasingly convoluted sieges of extended bartering.

He was in his element—almost literally so, in fact. The Kienholz compound, by the shores of Lake Pend Oreille, outside the hamlet of Hope (technically, in Beyond Hope), was only a hundred miles from the Depression-era farm, in rural Washington State, where he was born (in 1927) and grew up, and which (I realized once again, rereading the transcripts recently) had so decisively shaped him and his aesthetic—his *ethic*. At one point, for instance, we found ourselves talking about the sense of mortality which I'd suggested pervaded much of his work, and he said that such a theme might have had its roots in the farm. He started describing what it's like to pull a breech-birthed calf out of a cow with a small rope around its legs: "When the cow heaves, you pull; you've got your foot braced under her tail, on the flank of her leg, and then the legs of the

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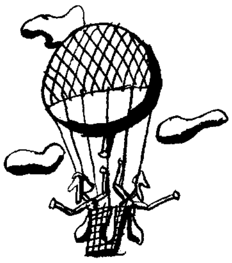
calf are coming out of her. And it's a hard birth for her, because she has to open to allow the rump of the calf to come through. . . . But you reach in, get the calf's tail, get that out, and you pull the calf. You take the mucus off its nose, so it can breathe. It's lying there exhausted and the cow's lying there bellowing and bleeding, but she stands up and starts licking it, gets it up on its feet. So you can have that—you can participate in that miracle, for instance."

Kienholz continued, "You teach that calf to suck on your fingers, so that you can teach it to drink out of a pail rather than suckle the cow, and then you start mixing the milk with the grain in small quantities, and then more and more, until finally it learns to eat grain rather than to drink milk. Then you pasture it, and you raise it, and then, one day, you take a small-bore shotgun and you go out and walk up to it and kill it.

"You jump back and wait a few minutes. You cut its throat, and you wait for it to stop twitching, because you can break your leg if it convulses and kicks. You cut its legs off, and you turn it over on its back, and you open it up and take out its innards and start skinning it. And that's meat. That's a realistic process to go through if you eat meat."

He paused, and then said, "I mean, to have something cellophane-wrapped—you know, on a counter, down at the farmers' market—is nice, I guess, as long as you understand that, when you buy that, you kill an animal someplace."



Not that Ed was a namby-pamby vegetarian, or anything like that—he wolfed veal, for instance, with considerable gusto—but he was one for taking responsibility, for not evading the sinewy interconnectedness of the world, in meat, as in all things.

Ed's mother was a devout Christian in a treacly, homiletic sort of way—"in a way, a fanatic," Ed used to say. She taught Sunday school, and she enlisted young Ed in the fashioning of crèches—his first tableaux. As the years passed, though, Ed would have none of it, yet his mother was always deeply proud of his eventual worldly achievement, if in perennially deep denial as to its evident purport.

His father, by contrast, was a moody, driven, spectacularly competent farmer—a master of virtually all the crafts required for "making do," from carpentry and welding through electrical maintenance and automotive repair—and he imparted his skills to his son. He was also an angry disciplinarian—regularly flogging the boy with a rubber hose (just as he himself had been flogged by his father)—until one day the teen-age Ed rose up in fury and they both suddenly realized that he'd become the stronger. After that, there were no more beatings.

"From my childhood I mostly remember the isolation," Ed said to me one day. "Being separate and apart. I used to sit in the barn and milk the cows and look out through the barn doors and see the aura of the lights above Spokane, which was some forty miles distant, and know that people were not milking cows in Spokane."

As soon as he graduated from high school—he was seventeen, and the war was just ending—he bolted. Over the next several years, he caromed among various small colleges around the Northwest, not staying long at any of them. He travelled, racking up a succession of odd jobs and two failed marriages, one of which produced a son, though the boy soon fell out of his life altogether (a statement that would perhaps be more appropriately phrased the other way around). He survived primarily through shrewd wheeling and dealing: a remarkably self-assured manner and a passion for hard bargaining would define essential aspects of his personality to the end of his days. (He always maintained that it was easier for a country boy to come to the big city—get had a few times and get wise—than it would ever be for a city boy to make it in the country. And he never tired of using me as a case in point.)

Kienholz arrived in Los Angeles one afternoon in 1952 or '53 (the date is uncertain), a brash naïf, and the canvases (or, more precisely, boards) that he spread across the bevelled lawn of a North Hollywood dentist a few days later (this, his first sale, being in fact a trade for the extraction of an impacted molar) were the richly impastoed concoctions of a cultural rustic. But in L.A. you could get your tooth pulled for one of those things. Ed figured he had died and gone to Heaven, and he decided to stay. Through the mid-fifties, steeped in the developing Beat culture, Kienholz began devoting more and more of his time to his art. Living a life of marginal subsistence at best, he scavenged among the back alleys and junkyards of the vast L.A. flatlands, seeking out stuff for his creations. It wasn't that he shunned standard artistic materials; he simply couldn't afford them. (On the other hand, the things people threw out in L.A.!) Making do, he'd slather boards with paint, using brooms for brushes, and layering the planes with ever more complex arrangements of nailed-on slabs and sticks.

The local art establishment was unimpressed, so Kienholz resolved to found an art establishment of his own. He put together a series of makeshift exhibition spaces for himself and his fellow Beat types, and then co-founded, with Walter Hopps, the legendary Ferus Gallery, manning the front desk throughout its first year from a closet-size workroom he'd secreted for himself over to the side.

Kienholz eventually abandoned those day-to-day responsibilities, in part because his own work was becoming all-consuming. His increasingly three-dimensional assemblages were beginning to come off the wall and stand as sculpture. In addition, the purely abstract presentation of the early works was becoming clotted with identifiable sociopolitical themes (race relations, sexual politics, the strangulations of fifties conformity, the prospect of nuclear annihilation), which were sometimes conveyed in the most visceral terms and were often pitched in an ironic key or given sardonic titles.

WITHIN a few years of his arrival in Los Angeles, Ed married for a third time. His wife, Mary Lynch, bore him a daughter, Jenny, in 1960 and, fifteen months later, a son, Noah. But the marital relationship itself was in growing trouble. One night, apparently reeling in despair over the situation, Ed perpetrated a freestanding assemblage that he subsequently titled "The Illegal Operation." (Fearful that Ed, in his grief, might destroy the piece, Hopps at one point kidnapped it for safekeeping.) It has turned out to be perhaps the key work of Kienholz's entire career, and arguably one of the masterpieces of postwar American art. Its subject appears to be a botched back-alley abortion, the woman's body represented by a sagging burlap sack filled with hardened concrete and trussed to the back of a stripped-down shopping cart; a gash slashes what is presumably the woman's midriff, and out of it pours an oozing slag, a sort of spent life force, a discrete, hopelessly expiring pile. The cart is surrounded by filthy buckets, pots, and bedpans, which, in turn, are filled with rusted, dark-stained surgical implements. On one side of the cart a naked light bulb dangles, nooselike, from an arching lampstand; on the other, uncannily, squats a dirty-pink milking stool, hastily abandoned—or so, anyway, it seems. The entire tableau is undergirded and unified by a grungy rug knitted in a spiralling design that manages to both draw the viewer in, vortexlike, and radiate the scene's quiet horror relentlessly outward.

And, yes, it is obviously about an abortion, but it is hardly just a piece of agitprop. In fact, while on a literal level it was decrying a legal status quo in which women were regularly forced to such extremes, it was no pro-choice celebration. It was, rather, about all things botched beyond redemption—not least relationships. Indeed, its aura is almost metaphysical. Whenever I've seen it (as I have again now, at the Whitney), I've been reminded of the Cabalistic intimation about the calamitous Breaking of the Vessels at the dawn of time—a disaster that the Cabalists believe preceded and foretokened the Fall itself. Ed has always adamantly refused to discuss the specific autobiographical origins of the piece. He did once aver, however, "I'm not sure what art is—you know, art, capital A-R-T—and I don't even care a hell of a lot about what art is, but if there is such a thing as art, and if I have ever made a piece of art, 'The Illegal Operation' would be it. That's because it still contains a kind of fury. I'm not sure how you could put emotion in an inanimate object, but that piece has emotion in it, for me and for other people. We bleed off it."

Within a couple of years of the completion of that piece, Mary and Ed were divorced, and—in a highly unusual outcome, especially for those days—Ed got principal custody of the children (then fifteen months and thirty months old). He was changing diapers, carting the kids to the park, bringing them home for their naps (and sneaking in a little time in his studio), getting them up and reading to them, playing with them, feeding them dinner, doing the dishes, and putting them to bed, after which, between eight in the evening and two in the morning,

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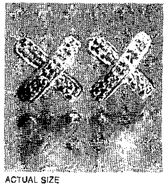

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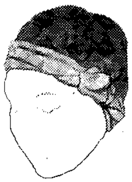

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he returned to his studio, for what may have been, astonishingly, the single most productive period of his life.

The works had now come almost completely off the wall, and he was fashioning one grittily detailed tableau assemblage after another, perfecting the technique of plaster-cast rendering with which his name soon came to be linked, and regularly foraging through alleys and flea markets and pawnshops for the protean hoard that was filling his ever-expanding, room-size pieces (and also for busted-up handguns and rifles, which he'd take home, repair, and then trade with the local dairyman for his kids' daily milk).

Thus, in addition to "Back Seat Dodge" and many other pieces, "The Beanery" now came into the world: a detailed replication, at two-thirds scale, of Barney's, a dark, dilapidated old hangout, bar, and eatery for Ed and many of his Ferus colleagues. For years, he had been trying to figure out some way to evoke the eerie squalor of the place, along with its material splendors, and the way its denizens retreated into its depths, for hours at a stretch, as a way of killing time. Then, one day (August 28, 1964), he happened to notice a headline in the *Herald-Examiner* in the vending case just outside the bar—"CHILDREN KILL CHILDREN IN VIET NAM RIOTS"—and the whole piece snapped into place in his mind. For months thereafter, he carted bottles and planks and other detritus up the sixty-nine steps to his home, in Laurel Canyon, and methodically plaster-cast a dozen-plus figures of the bar's time-killing habitués, giving each of them a stopped clock for a face. His children crawled about the emerging restaurant as if it were one large playpen. Eventually, he had to build rails down the hillside to be able to slide the finished work out.

The pieces from this period formed the core of Kienholz's LACMA show, an exhibition from which the artist emerged famous, not to say notorious. Around the same time, he got married for a fourth time, to a woman named Lyn Shear; this union was to last about five years. Kienholz had a few shows in New York in these years, but his attitude toward the New York art scene was always prickly. He was perfectly content to leapfrog over New York to the next phase of his career, which began with a 1970 show of eleven of his most ambitious tableaux, organized by Pontus Hulten, which toured museums in Stockholm, Amsterdam, Düsseldorf, Paris, Zurich, and London, to ever-mounting popular acclaim. Perhaps Kienholz's jaundiced view of American reality dovetailed particularly well with European perceptions of America in the late Vietnam period. At any rate, most of those tableaux never made it back to America; one of the great things about the Whitney retrospective is that for many of the pieces it affords a homecoming (albeit brief) to the land whose predicaments provoked them in the first place.

LYN and Ed split up around 1971, and he met Nancy a few months later. At the time, he was working on "The Middle Islands," his most ferociously despairing take yet on his recurrent theme of marriage. He seamlessly enlisted her in its ongoing fabrication, so it's not as though she didn't realize from the start what she was getting herself into.

When they met, she was twenty-eight and he was forty-four. Maybe, as some of their friends surmised, Ed was finally meeting a woman as strong and independent and gruff and ornery as he was—a woman who, in the words of one friend, "simply wouldn't take his shit." Though he was obviously fascinated by the whole package from the start, it was only gradually that he came to trust Nancy and the relationship completely. Once he did—years later—he felt he had to tell her. Nancy recalled recently, "We were in Berlin working in the studio, and I think I was reaching over to hang up a hammer or something. Ed was in his chair, rocking, as he usually did, just watching me, and suddenly he announced, 'O.K., Nancy, that's it.' 'What's it, Ed?' I asked him. He said, 'I give up.' 'You give up what, Ed?' 'That's it. I'm *your* hunk of meat.' I said, 'O.K., Ed, that's fine,' and kept on working, but to him it seemed important to have established that." Being someone's hunk of meat was Ed's idea of romance.

They were in Germany because Ed had been invited to spend a season in Berlin as a guest of the city's visiting-international-artists program. Thereafter, they began spending half of each year in Berlin and the other half in Idaho.

I used to savor my visits with Ed in Berlin. (Just hanging around with him—the zest with which he'd wade into the world, the kinds of things he'd notice—was itself a source of effervescent delight.)

One day, he invited me to join him on his regular trek through the local flea market. He marched intently down the aisles, a thick wad of bills in his pocket, pausing occasionally to consider this picture frame or that military medallion, this photograph album or that radio carcass. He seemed to be particularly drawn to the old, black-garbed widows with their pathetic wartime hoards spread out across ratty green blankets. "How much this?" he'd demand of one of them, holding up a short stack of tattered photographs. (Despite all his years in Germany, he never bothered to learn the language.) "*Fünfzehn*," the matron would pronounce with bored assurance, to which Ed was likely to bark back, "Fuck *fünfzehn!* Five!"—usually carrying the day. (Sometimes, afterward, pleased at having prevailed in the game, he'd nod at Nancy and have her pass the old lady a fifty-mark note once he'd left the scene.)

The sheer density of narrative that Ed could glean from such artifacts was incredible. "Look at this one here," he'd say, handing me a fairly standard-issue photograph of a stiffly posed Nazi soldier. "See how it must have been taken before he left for the front—look at the condition of the uniform—but then, clearly, he did leave, and this photo would have belonged to his girlfriend or maybe his mother. She would have picked it up daily—see there, in the corner, how her right thumb gradually wore away the image. And she'd have held it up close to her face—see how the trace of her close breathing discolored the area here right around his face. And then, probably, he was killed. I mean, those look like tearstains to me along the side of the image." Sure sounded plausible.

MEANWHILE, the Kienholzes were now truly working as a team. Some observers had previously found Ed's unilateral declaration of the work's co-authorship a bit strained, even patronizing. Already, back in 1976, when I first visited the Kienholz compound in Idaho, there was no doubt that Nancy had become a huge force in Ed's working life, but primarily, it seemed, as archivist, photographer, and general manager of the atelier. By the end of the eighties, however, the involvement had deepened.

Some of the vaster projects that Ed and Nancy undertook during the years of their collaboration are on display at the Whitney—among them "The Art Show," a hilarious sendup of a typical opening at some white-cube international art gallery. Nineteen fashionable poseurs are scattered about the pristine space in different postures of pomposity, while their snouts, fashioned, variously, out of automotive-air-conditioning vents and hair-dryer spigots, spew (at the touch of a button) so much multilingual art-critical hot air. Similarly, one might consider the equally ambitious, though considerably less subtle, "Ozymandias Parade": a gaudy, savagely phantasmagoric skewering of the vain excesses of the Reagan years, with Ed's own mother cast as the overburdened taxpayer, staggering under the weight of a puffed-up, medal-strewn general straddling her back, for whom Nancy's father served as the plaster-cast model. (Tom Reddin was never your typical L.A.P.D. chief.)

To my mind, however, among the finest achievements of the years of Ed and Nancy's collaboration are some of the more intimate tableaux, and particularly the more specifically autobiographical pieces. One, "Sollie 17," initially presents itself as a nondescript corridor inside some urban S.R.O. hotel, with one door slightly ajar. The viewer who ventures to peek in will find that the door opens only enough to afford a look at a haunting triple exposure—three views of a tired old man dressed in baggy underpants. First, he is lying on the bed, reading a paperback Western, his hand slipped under the waistband of his underpants. (In a typical Kienholz touch, the Western is entitled "A Handful of Men.") In the second exposure, he is sitting on the side of his bed, playing solitaire—a haggard profile. In the third, he is standing, his back to the viewer, looking out the window and thinking, perhaps, about the nothing he's made of his life.

If I call this piece autobiographical, it's in part because Ed repeatedly told me that it was based on a chance incident from his life. One day in 1965, while he was walking through the corridors of the Green Hotel, in Pasadena (he was seeking out Marcel Duchamp, who was in town for his own first retrospective, at the Pasadena Museum, then under the direction of the irrepressible Walter Hopps), he'd

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happened upon just such a moment: a door slightly ajar, his own prurient interest provoked, and a furtive glance within at a similar old man, whose startled expression was at once one of indignation at the violation of privacy and a desperately lonely plea for human contact of any kind.

But it's autobiographical in another way, too, for, as Ed often acknowledged, what he was portraying here (as, earlier, in "The Beanery") was a kind of life that, if things had gone only slightly differently, he could very easily have ended up living himself.

Indeed, Kienholz's art is often quite subversive. In "Sollie 17," for instance, just as you might begin feeling yourself superior to the old man in his underwear by the window, you notice, almost subconsciously, how, because of the way the door is blocked and angled, you are looking at him while you're scrunched in exactly his hunched posture. Kienholz manages the trick of transferring his own empathy onto you. He has hot-wired us with his own compassion.

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Loving is not for long
The bright day is flying—
Ladies, there's only a breath
Between living and dying!

—Katharine Anne Porter

On the morning of June 10, 1994, getting out of bed in his Idaho home, Ed was felled by a heart attack. He slumped to the floor, still conscious, lucid, calm. Nancy and some of the studio assistants had him rushed to the hospital in Sandpoint, about twenty miles up the lake, but he died within hours. While everybody else was coming unglued, Nancy turned to their longtime assistant, Tom Preiss, and said, "Get the plaster." She made a death mask on the spot.

A memorial service was held in Sandpoint four days later, and family, friends, neighbors, artists, and art types gathered from all over the world. A plaster cast of Ed's entire body, seated, his arms folded stoutly over his belly—a cast that Ed and Nancy had fashioned a few years earlier in order to make a bronze of him sitting by a bronzed campfire thinking about his absent father (in a tableau entitled "Mine Camp")—presided over the proceedings. Everybody I talked with about the event seemed to remember best the comments of Richard Jackson, an artist friend and onetime protégé of Ed's. "Their art is great," Jackson began, referring to both Ed and Nancy. "Like Ed, it sat at the table in its underwear and talked about life and anything and everything else." Jackson described how he had been drawn first to the art but then to Ed himself: "He was my hunting partner. I found an artist who likes to hunt, finally. . . . Hunting camp is such a great place that ol' big-hearted Ed wanted to take everyone hunting; and that's what you and all his friends have been doing for all these years, sitting around hunting camp with Ed. Work hard all day, sit around making plans for tomorrow, joking, playing cards, drinking, eating, discussing life, death, sex, heaven, hell, religion."

Jackson went on to relate how on the drive from the Spokane airport he had started thinking about religion. What if he and Ed had been wrong in all those conversations and there really was a God and his son was Jesus? Ed was going to be in big trouble. But then again he'd figured, "Ed isn't going to some terrible place that these other people made up." Driving on, he'd noticed how almost all the places in those parts had Indian names. "That's it, the Indians!" he proclaimed. "Ed wants to be at his hunting camp, he wants to be buried up there. Ed's going to the happy hunting ground; and believe me, folks, the hunting ground is a happy place. Now I see it pretty good."

Jackson paused, his eyes glistening. "Ed, I'm going to hunt around here for a little while longer and when I'm finished I'll meet you up at the camp."

As it happened, Ed was already up at the camp: the real Ed, his embalmed body, arms folded over his belly, was strapped into the passenger seat of the gleaming taupe 1940 Packard coupé in which he had let it be known he intended to be buried. (Nancy had grudgingly consented, but only on condition that Ed occupy the passenger seat. "I'm not going hurtling through all eternity with you at the wheel, Ed," she'd told him sternly.)

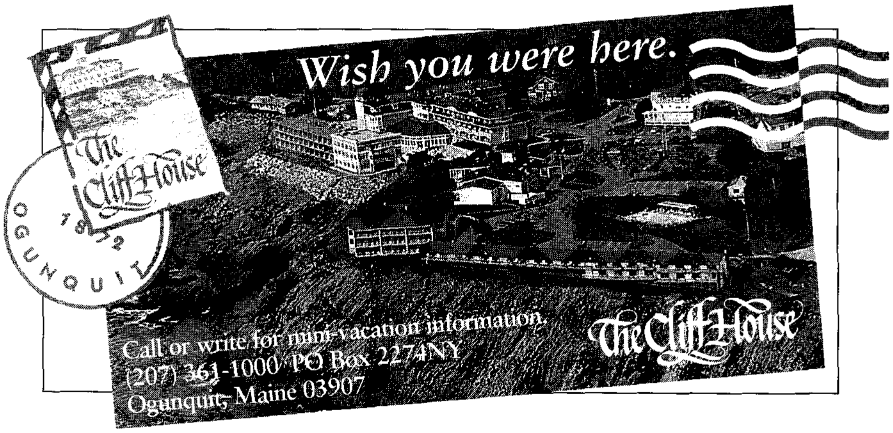
Earlier that morning, Ed's son Noah had climbed into the Packard to conduct the body on the hour-long drive back along the lakeside and up Howe Mountain to the hunting camp. Noah, a proficient carpenter and craftsman in his own right (he is currently employed as a studio carpenter in Hollywood), was in New York recently as part of the crew—"the travelling Kienholz circus," as that crew is sometimes dubbed—unloading the Kienholziana for the Whitney retrospective, and he took time out to tell me what had happened. "I wasn't letting anybody else take him up there, and it was an extraordinary experience," he said. "I got to have my last words with him there in the car—and, believe me, he was absolutely present. Partly, it was sad, strange, sombre, serious. But he'd prepared me for that my whole life, and I felt honored. He'd taken me hunting, shown me what a carcass was like, how to gut an animal, how not to be afraid of death. And the whole thing was really funny, too. The last few miles up Howe Mountain, it's one switchback curve after another, and with each one he came lurching for the wheel. I'd stiff him in the ribs, yelling, 'Get back there, you son of a bitch! I'm driving now!' " Noah laughed, and sighed, before concluding, "It was an incredible gift."

Noah drove the Packard to the lip of a ramp leading into a trench, next to the hunting cabin, that one of the assistants had backhoed out the day before. After the service, members of the funeral party converged, convoy style, on the scene. Nancy got in the Packard's driver's seat, beside Ed.

She herself took up the story for me a few hours after my conversation with Noah, while stealing her own break from the retrospective's installation. We were standing on the bridge over the Whitney moat—the "Back Seat Dodge" visible down below on the right, while over to the left, on the first-floor wall looming above the café, the installers had just hung a considerably more recent wall piece entitled "First Car First Date," an unusually sweet vignette consisting of a life-size cutaway of the back chassis of a car; an earnest, clean-scrubbed, and black-suited young boy at the wheel, staring fixedly ahead; his date beside him, in a crisp pink skirt, bobby socks, and saddle shoes, with a corsage on her lap; and a lake racing by outside the windows. It's evening but still bright, and the boy and girl are so achingly young; his softball and mitt are stashed on the floor in the back. Nothing terrible is going to happen tonight.

"So I got in the driver's seat and turned the key, and, of course, the engine wouldn't turn over," Nancy related. "Damn Packard—it happened every time. You could never take that car anywhere and expect to make it back. But it's the one he wanted—probably the car he lusted for as a kid. The engine churned and churned and churned: nothing. Finally, they had to push me down the ramp. I set the brake, got out, gave a last look. Ed had a dollar in his pocket; a bottle of good Italian red wine, vintage 1931, by his side; and a deck of cards—enough, probably, to get him started in the next world. I climbed out of the trench. The radio was playing Ed's favorite big-band music. We began tossing in clumps of dirt, flowers, playing cards . . ."

She was quiet for a moment. Then she commented that someday, when her time came, she hoped to be buried right there beside him. Just then, I happened to be looking at and past her at the wall piece. First date, I found myself thinking. Last tableau. ♦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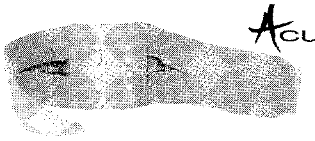
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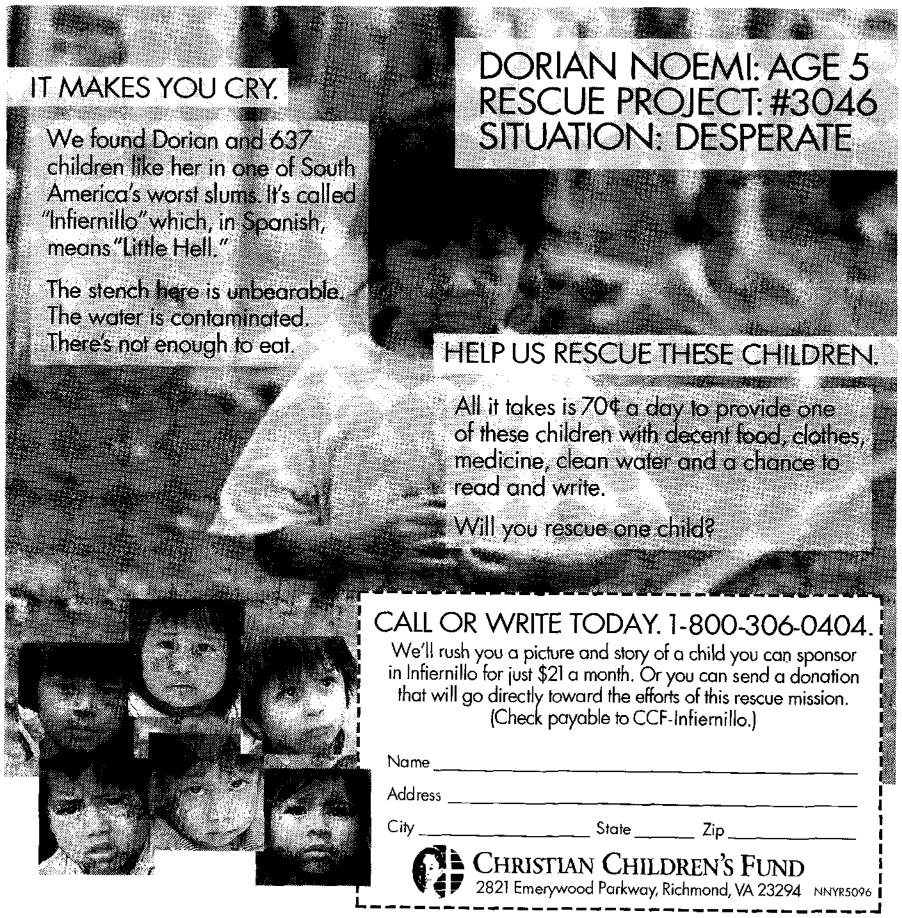
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ANNALS OF COMMUNICATIONS

THE REËDUCATION OF MICHAEL KINSLEY

What's been going on since the Beltway contrarian and the corporate cyber whizzes in Seattle got together to create a new kind of electronic magazine? Some very interesting ideas about journalism.

BY KEN AULETTA

WHEN Michael Kinsley announced, last November, that he was leaving Washington, D.C., to edit an on-line magazine in Seattle, colleagues and friends reacted as if he were moving to another planet. And, in a sense, he was. In Washington, Kinsley was celebrated as an editor and writer, and he had won fame and large lecture fees as the co-host of CNN's "Crossfire." Telephones rang; attention was paid.

On Kinsley's new planet—Microsoft's corporate headquarters, in Redmond, just outside Seattle—the phones rarely ring. There are nearly nine thousand employees on this college-like campus, and they converse, silently, by E-mail. Ties and jackets are shunned, jeans and uncombed hair are "cool," and the denizens speak a language of their own. A person might say, for instance, that he needed to locate the "owner" (person in charge) and then "drill down" (learn more) in order to "achieve granularity" (grasp the complexities) and then get to "2.0" (the next level) while avoiding "a bandwidth problem" (an overloaded schedule) or a "communications disconnect."

Kinsley has always thought of himself as a contrarian, an impression he fostered as the editor of *The New Republic* and as the writer of the magazine's "TRB" column. At Microsoft, he maintains that role because he has become the observant anthropologist. The Microsoft natives "have their own inside-the-Beltway culture here, too," Kinsley says. "They're not following primaries. They're following the new release of Netscape." The young men and women who work in each of the thirty Microsoft buildings receive the same free sodas and coffee, eat the same subsidized meals, and inhabit the same one- or two-"module" windowed offices. "Corporate socialism," he marvels. He also notes, "I'm the oldest person I run into all day." At forty-five, he is eleven years older than the average employee, and is older than every senior executive but one at Microsoft.

Even Kinsley's appearance sets him apart. He wears L. L. Bean chinos and cotton shirts, white socks, and the round clear-plastic-framed eyeglasses he first purchased from England's National Health Service—the kind of austere "war-criminal glasses," as he calls them, that were worn by former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara. But, since few of his new colleagues are concerned with appearances, he blends in. "Someone said to me that going from CNN to here is like going from a company where men wear makeup to a place where women don't," he says.

The relevant question about Kinsley, though, is not sartorial; it is whether the electronic magazine he is conceiving will be real. He is, metaphorically, jumping off a bridge—only he doesn't know whether water or cement awaits below. He does, however, know this: more than a third of all American households have computers, according to the national research firm Odyssey, and a rapidly expanding quarter of these households are connected to the Internet. Kinsley also knows that an on-line magazine is dirt cheap, since there are no costs for paper, printing, or postage. And he knows a larger truth: traditional middlemen—the Post Office; billing services; travel agents; department stores; video, record, or book stores; movie theatres; or bank tellers—are threatened by new delivery systems, from cyberspace to wireless technology. Those middlemen—who get between the product and the customer—will become "roadkill" on the information superhighway, in the phrase of Microsoft's technology guru, group vice-president Nathan Myhrvold. Myhrvold, a thirty-six-year-old Ph.D., writes lively, term-paper-length missives every couple of weeks, and circulates them among fellow-executives. Myhrvold believes that cyberspace is to America in the late twentieth century what Frederick Jackson Turner said the frontier was to America in the nineteenth century: the engine driving an economic democracy. A Myhrvold memo from September of 1993 declared:

> One of the most general and dramatic aspects of the information highway is to virtualize space and time. Put another way, the highway will break *the tyranny of geography*—the stranglehold of location, access and transportation that has governed human societies from their inception. . . . Assuming that the network is there, a person in Redmond or Manhattan or nearly anywhere else will have *equal* access to goods and services presented on the network.

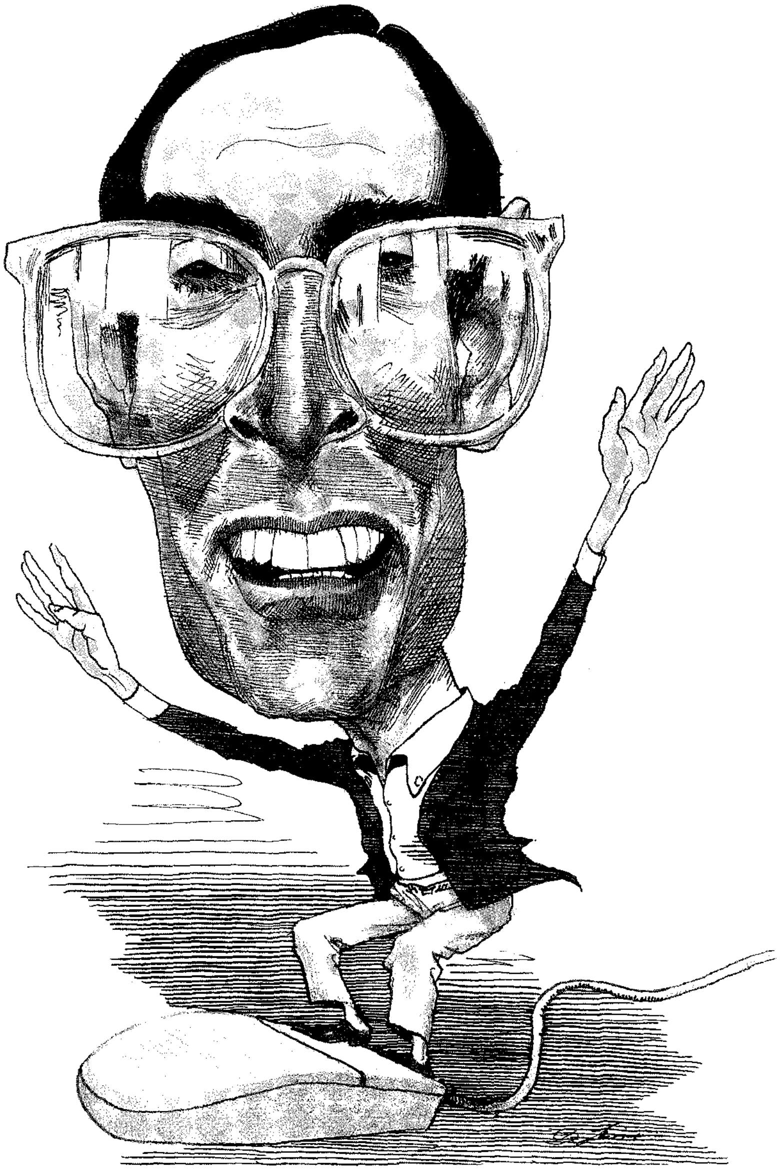
But this is stargazing. Back on planet Earth, none of the hundreds of electronic magazines started in the past year or so—not *HotWired*, or *Word*, or *Salon*, or *Feed*, or *Mr. Showbiz*, to name a few—have satisfactorily solved the puzzle of how to bill and collect from subscribers, or how to justify rates for advertisers. As for the audience, emerging technologies could make lots of information available, but it is not clear how aggressive—and invasive—these electronic publications are prepared to be. Nielsen Media Research can't even agree with itself about the number of people using the Internet: it reported last October that there were twenty-two million adult users and this April that there were just over nineteen million. One of the most widely trafficked entertainment magazines on the Internet is the year-old *Mr. Showbiz*, but its mixture of entertainment-industry reporting and gossip attracts only twenty-three thousand daily visitors, according to its deputy editor, Jim Albrecht. "Like every other site on the Internet, it's a money loser," Albrecht, who is twenty-eight and is based in Seattle, says. "I've never heard of a site that makes money. The gamble is that this is going to be a big advertising industry." Build it, and they will come.

What Kinsley has set out to build is a weekly public-affairs magazine somewhat to the left of *The New Republic* but much quirkier than the pigeonhole he found himself imprisoned in as the "liberal" on "Crossfire." The new weekly magazine, which will be called *Slate*, will run to about twenty-five thousand words (*The New Republic* runs to about forty thousand words), and the most optimistic goal, according to Russell Siegelman, who until recently was the general manager of on-line services for Microsoft, is a paid circulation of about a hundred thousand. Siegelman, who is thirty-three, is Kinsley's immediate superior.

To retrieve *Slate*, those who subscribe—Microsoft is discussing rates of between twenty and thirty dollars a year, and about three dollars for a single issue—will connect to the Internet and type "http://www.slate.com," and it will appear. Other magazines are "read" in the same way—sometimes to the consternation of World Wide Web users, who find that text and pictures are occasionally retrieved with excruciating slowness, or sometimes, when traffic is very heavy, not at all. As we've seen with bold promises to provide video-on-demand and five hundred channels and handheld computers, technology sometimes moves more slowly than the human mouth.

What will set *Slate* apart from most electronic magazines, Kinsley hopes, will be a traditional, linear sensibility. He will run pieces longer than seven hundred words, which is generally thought to be the maximum attention span of those who scroll cathode-ray screens and skate from site to site with a mouse. He will try to navigate between becoming a data bank, as are many Web sites, and a hip, dripping-with-irony magazine where people write faster than they think. Kinsley is an unabashed élitist, dismissive of the tell-me-what-you-think Zeitgeist of the Web. He does not apologize: "I'm too old to go whoring after twenty-somethings." Later, he adds, "I'm operating on the assumption that you can give people a meal."

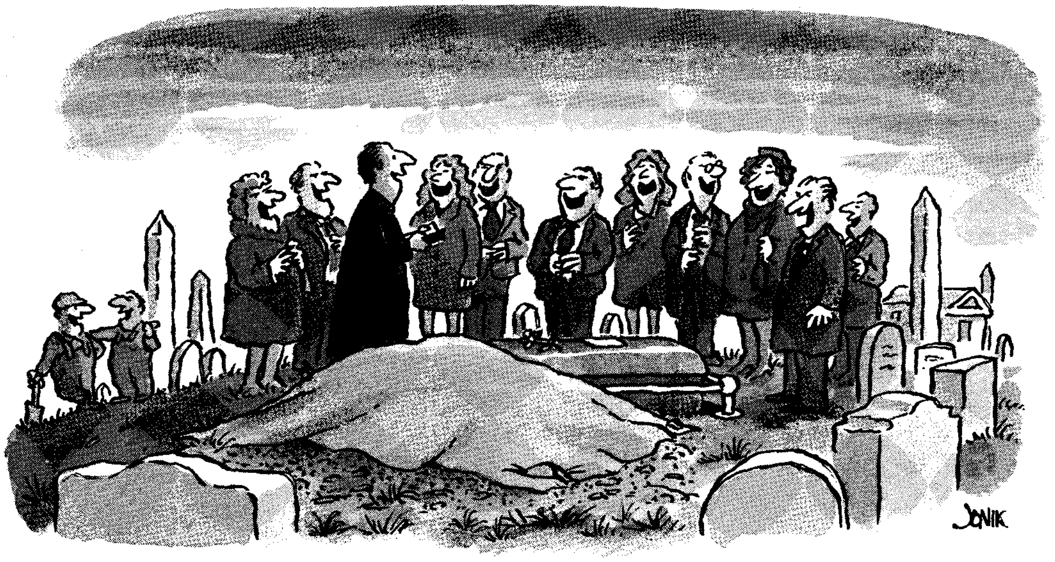
But there are those who think this is the wrong approach to the Internet. Esther Dyson, the president of EDventure Holdings, who was a Harvard classmate of Kinsley's and later an Internet pioneer, believes that an electronic editor must be more "an intellectual bartender than a chef." She says, "Michael doesn't suffer fools gladly. Generally, you want someone who's a little kinder. You need to understand; you're not in control. In the interactive world, the bartender doesn't do all the talking. The bartender knows who should talk to whom." If Dyson's guess—and it can be only that—is correct, then Kinsley the editor is destined to become another middleman, another roadkill in the abyss of cyberspace.



Go Web, young man: The new medium is taking the famously preppy Kinsley to unexpected places.

DAVID LEVINE

"I WAS your classic nonathlete" is how Kinsley describes being brought up as the only son in a Jewish home in Birmingham, Michigan. His younger sister, Susan, is a lawyer and writer who is now working with refugees in Sarajevo. Michael's father, George, who was a surgeon, died of a heart attack in 1974, at age sixty-seven; he was by most accounts, including his son's, a modest man who worked far too hard. His mother, Lillian, a former high-school debating champion who now lives in West Palm Beach, pushed Michael to excel in school and to take piano and art lessons. He starred as a student at Harvard; as an editor at the *Crimson;* as a Rhodes scholar at Oxford, where, he says, he "turned into an Anglophile"; and then at Harvard Law School. In 1976, he was a twenty-five-year-old third-year law student when Martin Peretz, who had been a college teacher of his and had bought *The New Republic* two years earlier, proposed that he become its managing editor. He accepted and moved to Washington. Two years later, he ostentatiously quit *The New Republic* after a spat with Peretz, who almost instantly lured him back with a raise and a grander title, editor. For the next dozen years, he alternated in that job in three-to-four-year stints with Hendrik Hertzberg (now the editorial director of *The New Yorker*). Kinsley had a kid-in-a-candy-store sort of journalistic experience: in 1981, he moved to New York to become editor of *Harper's* (for a troubled twenty months); returned to Washington and *The New Republic* in 1983 to write "TRB" for the next eleven years; again became editor of *The New Republic* in 1985; went to England in



"But, seriously . . ."

1989 as the "American Survey" editor of *The Economist;* and crossed the Atlantic again seven months later, to sign up with CNN. By contrast with his hot, snarling "liberal" posture on "Crossfire," his "TRB" columns, op-ed pieces in the *Wall Street Journal*, and articles in *Time* and *The New Yorker* were models of clinical precision.

Somehow, Kinsley's journalistic reputation survived the "Crossfire" food fights—six and a half years of shouted battle with the "conservative" bunker. Kinsley made no secret of a yearning to run a magazine again. Yet when an offer came to edit *New York* magazine, in January of 1994, he agonized for weeks. Then he said yes. And then, seven hours later, he said no. A man who had grown up in a leafy Detroit suburb and owned a house in Chevy Chase, Maryland, he dreaded the idea of living in New York City. He also dreaded making a decision. The *New York*-magazine episode, he admits now, "was a midlife crisis."

What the decision did do was put Kinsley in a frame of mind to change his life. He grew a beard. He gave up his "TRB" column. "I spent a year and a half sulking over my stupidity in turning it down," he says. He saw himself, correctly, as skilled at spotting and nurturing talent, as someone who knew how to make a home for writers, treat them as peers, serve them potluck dinners in Chevy Chase. By the spring of 1995, he recalls, "I was determined to be on the next train to pull out of the station no matter where it was going—provided that I was the engineer."

He talked with the Time Warner, Inc., editor-in-chief, Norman Pearlstine, and others about editing either what he calls "a highbrow news magazine, roughly like *The Economist*, or an overtly liberal magazine to occupy the space *The New Republic* used to occupy." But the conversations were proceeding slowly, partly because such publications have high fixed costs and low circulation. What ignited his imagination was a chance conversation with Jeffrey Dearth, then the president of *The New Republic*. Kinsley recalls, "He mentioned to me that there are now storefronts in shopping malls in suburban Virginia that will set you up with a Web page for a magazine and that it could be like *The New Republic*." Only a lot cheaper. Kinsley was not entirely computer illiterate. He had been exchanging E-mail for years with the writer Nicholas Lemann, his closest friend, and had just begun to explore the Internet. "I would say I have computer-nerd tendencies but keep them suppressed," he explains. The conversation with Dearth, however, galvanized Kinsley to write Pearlstine and ask, "Would you be any more receptive to a magazine on the Web?"

Pearlstine arranged to meet him on August 7th. In preparation, on July 27th Kinsley sent a five-page, single-spaced memorandum sketching what he, interestingly, called "a traditional magazine, or something fairly close to it, distributed on the Web." Kinsley calibrated his "motivation" this way: only one per cent was "because of the new technical possibilities of *presentation* on the Web (e.g., hyperlinks, sound, video)"; fifty per cent was "because it miraculously sidesteps all the printing and distribution problems/costs of a traditional magazine"; and the remaining forty-nine per cent was based on his sense that this was "a new medium, it's almost certainly the wave of the future, and . . . we want in." Kinsley's focus was more on the message than on the medium, and he vowed that those who worked on the magazine would not get distracted by technological "bells and whistles."

In his memo Kinsley contrasted his approach with that of other electronic publications by saying that his would have "an attitude," but it would differ from the voguish "free-floating cynicism and snideness" that is the "cheap attitude" prevalent on the Internet. He proposed to charge subscribers for the magazine rather than offer it free (as most on-line publications do). He proposed a weekly print version as well.

The presentation to Pearlstine went well, and further discussion followed. But, as days and then weeks passed, Kinsley grew impatient. Then he saw the September 4th issue of *Newsweek*, which mentioned that the Microsoft chairman, Bill Gates, was "looking to hire a big-name editor" for a new news division, the Microsoft Network. Kinsley knew the Microsoft executive vice-president, Steven Ballmer, slightly from a Harvard connection. Kinsley wrote to Ballmer and asked, "Do I qualify as a big-name editor?"

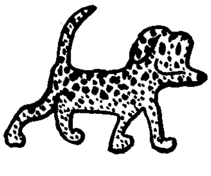
He did, even though Ballmer said *Newsweek* was wrong—Microsoft was not then searching for an editor. But, as *Newsweek* had reported, the software giant was eager to expand into the content business, to develop new products as well as new technology, thus avoiding the fate that Nathan Myhrvold had predicted for most middlemen. In fact, by the summer of 1995 Microsoft had concluded that investing in new technology alone would not permit the company to maintain its astonishing growth—net revenues soared to nearly six billion dollars last year, and net income was one billion four hundred and fifty-three million dollars. The company was belatedly beginning to focus on the Internet and three areas of content: an on-line content provider like the Microsoft Network; a small number of "branded" properties, which could include a magazine like Kinsley's; and consumer software. Ballmer telephoned Kinsley and told him he was interested, and said he'd get back to him.

When Ballmer got off the phone, he E-mailed several colleagues. All expressed eagerness to explore teaming with Kinsley. The most passionate proponent was probably on-line-services chief Russell Siegelman, who read *The New Republic* cover to cover each week and calls himself "a huge fan" of Kinsley's. Another executive drawn to Kinsley was Myhrvold. In a memo that Myhrvold distributed internally last July 16th, "Principles for Online Content and Brands," he noted that records, most books, and movies were " 'published' by companies which play essentially no role in the actual creation of the material," and that for most entertainment-information companies, with the exception of entertainment companies like Disney, "a strong brand is not a large source of value. People do not buy records because they were published by Sony Records, or Geffen Records—instead they buy Madonna, Aerosmith or Zubin Mehta. . . . The best model for online content in the existing media world is the magazine business, where editorial brands can become the primary enduring sources of value." Such magazines, Myhrvold argued, would be cheap to produce and distribute on-line, and didn't require a vast audience to succeed.

In Ballmer's view, however, there were two drawbacks to Microsoft's aligning with Kinsley. As Ballmer, a prematurely bald man of forty who wears bright crewneck sweaters and whose booming voice is often enlisted to fire up the troops at corporate rallies, spelled out the drawbacks for me, the first was "Is this a business?" and the second was political: "Does this company have to worry about having him in terms of having a point of view?" Kinsley describes himself as "a perennial malcontent." He relishes skewering public figures and, just as frequently, public pieties. "I am honestly bewildered by the frequent complaint that American culture is hostile to religion—that religious beliefs are routinely belittled and held up to scorn," he once wrote. "Does anybody really think it's harder to stand up in public, in 1993 America, and say, 'I believe in God,' than it is to stand up and say, 'I don't'?" He once deflated Vice-President Al Gore by describing him as "an old person's idea of a young person." As a thirty-year-old, Kinsley eviscerated the very Washington talk-show circuit he later became part of in a savagely funny piece, "Jerkofsky & Company," with sendups of George ("George III") Will reciting from Bartlett's quotations and Hugh ("Sidewall") Sidey boasting of "my major lunches around Washington" and Marvin ("Jerkofsky") Agronsky lowering his voice to say, "Concern mounts in Washington about any number of things. Life on earth continues, but doubts arise about its purpose or justification."

Russell Siegelman invited Kinsley to visit Microsoft in mid-September. Siegelman and Peter Neupert, the vice-president for strategic partnerships, took him to dinner, and the three discussed Kinsley's ideas and the possibility of a marriage with Microsoft. Kinsley welcomed their thoughts. What he said he wouldn't welcome was any limitation on his editorial freedom. The magazine had to be "lively," he recalls saying to them, and "the only way to be lively is to make trouble. You understand?" They said they understood. "In my experience," he continued, "trouble comes not when you attack a company but when you attack the owner's friends. For example, Warren Buffett"—a friend of Bill Gates. Understood, they said. Were they prepared for the possibility that he might attack Microsoft? No problem.

On September 18th, a Monday, as is the Microsoft custom when recruiting an executive, Kinsley was scheduled to be interviewed individually by most of Microsoft's hierarchy, except Gates. Kinsley pressed each about editorial independence but also talked at length about his vision for an electronic magazine. In turn, they pressed him on politics. The group vice-president Pete Higgins, who, along with Myhrvold, presides over the Applications and Content Group, remembers worrying about whether Kinsley was too "left" and wondering aloud whether his magazine might be paired with a conservative counterpart. The Microsoft executives, despite their belief that geography was becoming irrelevant, told Kinsley that, "for synergy reasons," he should edit the magazine on their campus, and not from Washington, D.C., or New York.



On this first visit, there was "synergy" between Kinsley and Microsoft. "I thought he was a kindred spirit," recalls Patty Stonesifer, who, at thirty-nine, is the senior vice-president of the Interactive Media Division. "He has a kind of intellect that likes to break down issues and consumer needs and marketplaces into an understandable and manageable and parcellable challenge." At the end of the visit, Kinsley told Siegelman, "If you guys are interested in doing something with me, I'm interested."

They were interested. That very night, in an E-mail sent to seven Microsoft managers at ten-thirteen, Siegelman wrote:

> Having him be an MS employee would legitimize MS as a content company to a large degree. . . . I think we can get him, but it will take the right offer and selling. His one big issue is church and state: everyone today gave him the right message about senior mgmt not mucking with editorial decisions, but I think he will need constant reassurance of this. My bottom line: I think that Mike is super and would be a fantastic catch.

The following Friday, Kinsley E-mailed Siegelman:

> A few more thoughts as you guys decide whether/how you want to proceed. . . . Pete Higgins seemed to have some concern about my being "on the left." I hope you can reassure him that my politics are pretty eclectic, averaging out I suppose as a moderate-liberal with a libertarian streak. One thing I would NOT be interested in would be being "paired" with a conservative product. That would be unfair to me, and unfair to the real left. It's one of the things I'm trying to get away from at Crossfire.
>
> But it did occur to me that, even if whatever-it-is-we're-talking-about starts out as a single "magazine" product, it might contain (let's call them) "modules" or mini-magazines from different political viewpoints. Not just left/right, but mainstream conservative; mainstream liberal; progressive left; libertarian; agrarian/luddite/unabomber (!); etc.

Even before Microsoft made Kinsley an offer, these exchanges with the technology-oriented company had planted an idea that would flower. "I like your idea of 'mini-magazines,' " Siegelman E-mailed to Kinsley. He went on:

> This makes sense. In the world of the Internet it is not always clear when the "boundaries" between "publications" start and end because everything is hyper-linked. We definitely want to create an online magazine that has brand, and everything hangs together as "one" magazine. But one way to think of this is as a conglomeration of "mini-modules" that can be linked together in several ways.

"Glad you like the 'modules' notion," Kinsley E-mailed back, revealing that this new medium was beginning to alter his message.

> I've been thinking further about that and a variation (or addition) might be a sort of on-line McLaughlin Group, only more sophisticated and intellectually honest: really

> smart people . . . discussing some issue (eg, Medicare reform) in a dialogue supervised by me, purged of sound bites and cheap shots, and with some hope of dialectical progress toward agreement/solution.

The internal Microsoft debate persisted for six weeks, largely because the debaters were vexed by the "political" issue. But they knew that an association with Kinsley would "teach us a lot," Patty Stonesifer recalls. The Microsoft people also knew that they were late to see the potential of the Internet and needed content for it.

By late October, Kinsley had heard nothing concrete from Microsoft or Time Warner, and was becoming anxious. "I then called Microsoft and Time Warner and said I needed a decision," Kinsley says.

The ultimatum led Siegelman to go see Nathan Myhrvold and Pete Higgins and say, he recalls, "Look, we've got to nail this down. If we wait much longer he's going to work for Time Warner. . . . Can I send an E-mail to Gates that you will back?" Gates had been briefed by Ballmer and Myhrvold and was in agreement. Although Gates had yet to meet Kinsley or even exchange an E-mail with him, he was telling people that Kinsley's initial electronic-magazine memo was "brilliant." Gates gave his assent.

Siegelman thereupon called Kinsley with an offer to make him the editor of Microsoft's on-line magazine based in Redmond. The company would pay him "two-thirds of what I was getting just to do 'Crossfire,' " Kinsley says, refusing to confirm his previous salary. (His pay, a Microsoft insider says, is just under two hundred thousand dollars, not counting a bonus.) He would be an employee, not an owner, but if the magazine was successful he would be likely to see the results reflected in bonus checks and stock options. Time Warner also came through with an offer. Unlike Microsoft, it proposed an employment contract that would run for three years, with a heftier salary. But Time Warner would not pledge to back his magazine and promised only to take a hard look at it. Kinsley weighed the two offers, agonizing much as he had done when he turned down *New York* magazine. The safe thing to do was to stay at CNN. But Kinsley was ready now to change his life.

Microsoft announced the appointment on November 6th. Within Microsoft, executives congratulated themselves that by hiring Kinsley they had achieved "name branding." He was welcomed as a "media star" by the Seattle *Times*. In D.C., the reaction was that he was simply mad to walk away from a visible and prosperous platform. Friends like Lemann praised his courage. "It's a kind of present-at-the-creation feeling," Lemann said. "I'm intensely curious about what he comes up with." Others were dubious. "There are decent on-line publications like *Word* and *Suck* and *Salon*," said *New York's* founding editor, Clay Felker, who directs the Felker Magazine Center at the Graduate School of Journalism at Berkeley. "Nobody wants to read very much. If Kinsley is thinking he can put on a version of *The New Republic* or his column, they won't read it. . . . Our eyes get tired quicker on a computer screen. Plus it isn't very practical. People look at a screen as work, not pleasure. It doesn't have the portability of print. As a result, you have to write differently in order to keep people interested." The new medium, Felker added, requires more graphics, more interactivity, more diversions. In a discussion on the WELL, a bulletin board based in San Francisco, the news was greeted with some of the "attitude" that Kinsley had deplored: "It's very VERY nice to know that Mr. Kinsley will be coming in to save us from the veddy tedious web magazines we are forced to sludge through . . . all tepid pieces of crap for cyberfreaks" (kieran); "Somehow, despite his dweebish nature, I don't picture Kinsley as someone who hangs out online and is up on digital culture" (srhodes).

And Kinsley was soon reminded that his project was only a wavelet in the Microsoft ocean. The on-line magazine was just one of more than fifty product lines reporting to the Interactive Media Division. On December 19th, five days after Microsoft and NBC announced a joint effort to fashion a twenty-four-hour cable news channel and on-line news service, Kinsley told me, "I had no idea about it. I didn't know they were planning to become a direct rival to CNN. That was a little embarrassing to me." Not enough to dampen his enthusiasm, however. "Even if it's a total flop, it's an adventure," he said. In a matter-of-fact tone, he added, "There are lots of people who are good writers, many of them are better than me. I think there are fewer people who are better magazine editors than I am."

"Negotiations are going to be tougher than I thought. Your wife is being backed by Syria."

THE first thing Microsoft employees noticed about Michael Kinsley when he appeared for work in Building 25 on January 2, 1996, was not the mail-order khakis or the green four-door Honda Accord, though these stood out as somewhat preppy. They noticed that he was wearing

21 The Location, Location, Location Arms

a white "Department of Justice" baseball cap. This was a flashing-neon reminder of the four-year federal probe of Microsoft, as well as a reminder of Kinsley's independence. They might have noticed, as well, that his closet-size one-module office contained no pictures of family or friends. Like many of the driven employees on this sprawling campus, Kinsley has Spartan tastes. A lifelong bachelor, he is thrilled to live in a self-contained world, where there is food and everyone can look out a window and see nothing but grass—and Microsoft buildings.

Physically, Kinsley has about him a languid, professorial air. His long fingers rarely move as he talks, his arms stiffly by his side; his eyes seem stretched open, for he seldom blinks, and from behind his oversized McNamara glasses his dark eyes stay glued to the person to whom he is speaking. Unlike the performer on CNN, Kinsley the editor speaks slowly, deliberately, quietly. Nothing about him—not the short, neatly parted black hair, not the parsimonious gestures, not the bland clothes—detracts from the feature that people at Microsoft or at *The New Republic* usually mention first: his intelligence. It is in this respect that Kinsley fits right in at Redmond. "It's a little like a summer math camp for high-school kids," Steve Ballmer says of the Microsoft culture. "People have to prove they have the right answer—'I challenge that!' "

To walk the mazelike corridors of Building 25, or any of the other buildings on the campus, is to encounter a sameness, where everyone has the same glassed entrance, the same space in which to toil. From his first day at work, Kinsley had the same office with the same adjustable desk and Compaq notebook computer with docking station used by many of his colleagues. What Kinsley didn't have was a plan for his magazine. "All I had was this vague memo," Kinsley remembers. "I had no business plan, no staff, no anything. All I had was an office."

He didn't even have a name for the magazine. He spent the first few days writing a memo that added flesh to the bones of his skeletal periodical. The memo—ten and a half single-spaced pages, which he finished on January 9th—began by defining his magazine's audience as the kind of "politically and culturally engaged people" who read *The Economist*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New Republic*. For those without a computer, there would be a weekly mailed version of the magazine to "reinforce the idea that we are putting out a *real* magazine." He remained opposed to getting swept away by the technology: "Our guiding maxim should be, 'It's the journalism, stupid.' . . . In much on-line stuff now, the tail wags the dog."

The magazine, he continued, would not "push any particular political viewpoint." Nor would it obsess about "objectivity":

> This will be a weekly magazine. Obviously, "weekly" is a metaphor, just like "magazine." Material will come and go all the time. But, at least in the early days, we need to reinforce the metaphor, to make traditional magazine readers feel comfortable in this new medium. . . .
>
> There should be a notional moment each week when we "go to press" and "hit the stands" (one and the same in this medium). I would say Friday midnight. This will allow us to summarize the week, and allow people to read us "fresh" over the weekend. It will also highlight our advantages over traditional weeklies. Time and Newsweek "close" on Saturday; they reach subscribers and newsstands Monday at the earliest, and often Wednesday, Thursday or later.

Even with a Friday closing, Kinsley stressed, the magazine—"the site"—would "not be 'dead' for a week." Here he demonstrated some movement toward Microsoft colleagues who had been pushing him to use their on-line advantages and also to accept the industry view that these "Webzines" be updated with reliable frequency: Kinsley proposed to change features during the week. Again, however, he raised a cautionary flag: "Obsessing too much about being up-to-the-minute is, I suspect, a potential trap and distraction. We are selling analysis and commentary, not news."

As for a title, "this is the biggest single editorial decision we make, and we must make it soon," he wrote. "We want something that doesn't scream 'cyberspace' (or, worse, 'Microsoft'), but suggests it with a wink." The contents of the magazine, Kinsley said, would require "a combination of little appetizers, solid meat-and-potatoes, and dessert." He expanded the definitions of the features presented in his July memo to Time Warner, starting with a cover, or home page:

> We need a signature look, like The New Yorker's illustrations. My idea would be a political cartoon, either by the same artist every week, if we can discover a great new one, or from various artists. . . . Also, would

it be possible, with a click, for readers to install the cover cartoon as their screen saver for the next week? That might appeal to a lot of people, and of course would be a constant free ad for us. And what about a musical logo: a theme song (say, a few bars of jazz piano, or of Bach) that plays whenever our cover pops up?

A section he was particularly excited about—a "mediated forum," which he envisioned as a cross between the "McLaughlin Group" and the letters column of *The New York Review of Books*—would also benefit from technology. With "written, not spoken" responses composed overnight, the dialogue could extend through the week, producing "a far higher level of debate, especially if the participants are chosen for genuine knowledge and intellectual honesty rather than TV charisma." An ideal "first topic," he wrote, "would be antitrust: 'Is Microsoft a Dangerous Monopoly?' " The editor, who had frequently lambasted "spin doctors," added this spin: "A lively and balanced forum on that would get us lots of attention and prove our editorial independence from the start. Maybe Gates would even participate?"

Other departments would include a "short, highly judgmental profile of some important figure in the news"; a "kinetic visual" feature that might offer "an interactive map"; perhaps "interactive fiction," though he confessed to a "strong, ignorant prejudice that it must be crap." The memo pleaded for help from Microsoft to locate a publisher to handle business matters. He noted that he had budget authorization for eight people, including himself and an administrative assistant. If the publisher worked full time, and if he needed two technical people, that left him with three editorial slots: a deputy working alongside him in Redmond, and an editor in both D.C. and New York. Defending this geographic division, he wrote, "Does it make sense to try to put out a national magazine from Seattle, without *any* presence in the cultural and political capitals? Even in cyberspace?"

As for a great mystery of cyberspace—how to make such ventures viable businesses—Kinsley envisaged revenues coming from advertising, subscribers, and syndication of pieces. Another mystery: Who was reading the stuff? On-line services often boast of the number of "hits" they receive, equating this with readers. On many sites, however, when a visitor clicks on the title page it is counted as a hit. So is each click on an article or a piece of art. A single reader may be credited with twenty separate hits. Kinsley was also discovering truths that others had encountered before. Last November, David Zweig, a former Time Warner magazine executive, launched *Salon* (www.salon1999.com), a magazine close in spirit to the one Kinsley envisioned. Zweig met resistance from advertisers, which he considered normal for any new medium. The tougher obstacle may be the emotional resistance of subscribers. "It's too early to charge," Zweig told me. "I'd love to charge," but customers are "allergic." Kinsley, in his January memo, anticipated this resistance, and separated it into three categories:

> a) Technical. Can you safely give a credit-card number over the Internet? I gather this problem is rapidly being solved. b) Materialist. It's hard for people to feel that they should pay real money for something that has no physical existence. (Software itself originally had—and has largely overcome—the same problem.) c) Spiritual. A widespread feeling that charging for content amounts to "fencing off" cyberspace, and violates the ideology—almost the religion—of the Web.

Kinsley explained why he wanted to charge readers: "One purpose of this whole exercise should be to help people over the conceptual hump of thinking that when they buy a magazine, they're buying the paper and ink rather than the words and pictures. You do that by offering a product so good that people are willing to pay for it." He hoped the first issue would be ready by late April. And, because the first issue would be treated as a Broadway opening, "we don't have the luxury of an out-of-town tryout. We've got to be good from the start."

AFTER his first month at Microsoft, Kinsley was still thought to harbor certain Luddite tendencies. "When he first came here, he was very— I won't say 'anti,' but he didn't want to do 'technology for technology's sake,' " recalls John Williams, who is thirty-one and had been a Microsoft manager for five years before becoming Kinsley's publisher in late January. Bill Barnes, a twenty-nine-year-old self-described "geek," who had been at Microsoft as a programmer for seven years and transferred in January to serve as the program manager for Kinsley's project, prodded Kinsley to confront the consequences of his new medium. In an E-mail Barnes expressed enthusiasm

SHOWCASE
BY RICHARD AVEDON

CHAMELEONS

MOMENTS before the opening performance of the Broadway revival of Edward Albee's "A Delicate Balance," the actress Rosemary Harris was paged to a backstage pay phone. It was her twenty-six-year-old daughter, Jennifer Ehle, calling from London. "Mum," Ehle said, "I've won." Her mother burst into tears.

Against formidable competition, Ehle had won a BAFTA award, the British Emmy, for her television performance as Elizabeth Bennet in "Pride and Prejudice." The American-born actress, who has done all her training in England, was blessed with just the right mixture of warmth and irreverence to play Jane Austen's heroine. (In accepting the award, she thanked her wig.) As the child of an English actress who has spent much of her distinguished career touring American stages, Ehle changed schools eighteen times to accommodate her mother's schedule. Often, she sat at night in dressing rooms, listening to her mother's performances over the P.A. system. Her father is the novelist John Ehle, and she'd wake to the sound of his typewriter. "She is her father's daughter, and she writes very well," Harris says. "The acting signs were there, but I thought she'd follow in his path."

Today, mother and daughter disclaim close similarities. Others disagree: when Peter Hall, unaware of their connection, auditioned Ehle for his miniseries "The Camomile Lawn," he jotted down, "Rosemary Harris's voice." Harris allows that the two of them are "chameleons"—equally adept at sounding English and American. Ehle, who is currently in Australia making a film about women prisoners during the Second World War, feels that she is just coming into her own: "I learned so much from my mother's energy and optimism. But I've only now become confident enough to accept the occasional acting note from her." In return, Harris says, "I miss her terribly. But then I can just put on a tape of 'Pride and Prejudice.' " —JULIE KAVANAGH

Rosemary Harris and Jennifer Ehle, London, November 26, 1995.

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for his editorial ideas but warned that to deliver a printed version of the magazine posed problems, including the poor quality of "print on a typical computer paper."

Barnes also cautioned that the technology they were reliant on was still relatively primitive. Their billing system, for example, would initially depend on "old technology like users entering passwords for authentication" and customers phoning an 800 number to subscribe. "Predictions: billing on the Internet is the hardest problem. And one we're not chartered to solve, though we need a solution from MSN (or Microsoft, or somebody)."

All these issues, and more, were pressing on Kinsley as January expired. He felt swamped. He still had not met, or even exchanged E-mail, with Bill Gates. He felt like a Martian. He would go to Russ Siegelman's weekly staff meetings and listen to the people chatter about "P & L's," "boot," "DPI," "IMD," "Schedule +," "domains," "Gantt." He once whispered to me, "I have no idea what they're talking about." He couldn't even figure out how to make his office less hot, and ended up sending an E-mail to "Furnfac Account" on January 26th which read, "Is this the place to write about office temperature? If so, could mine be cooled down a bit?"

Kinsley had not yet had a chance to see Seattle by daylight. He had purchased an apartment in Redmond after telling a real-estate agent that he didn't want to look at more than one. The place, with its bare white walls, had an unlived-in look, except for a fussy arrangement of mostly nonfiction books and CDs, ranging from Bach to Fats Waller. Aside from a Falcone piano, most of the functional furniture was new, since Kinsley had sold much of his before leaving Washington. Over morning coffee, he would read the New York *Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, glancing out the bay window at Lake Washington and, on a clear day, at the Olympic Mountains. Then he would get his Accord from one of the rows of parking spaces allotted to the primarily youthful residents of this bland suburban village, drive to Building 25, work, eat lunch and usually dinner in his office, and get home just in time to go to bed. Because the frugal Kinsley would be content living in a medium-sized closet, he was not unhappy, but he told me, "I miss my friends. I miss the buzz a little bit. They're not talking around here about who wrote 'Primary Colors.' "

Bill Barnes E-mailed Kinsley on January 24th, saying that they needed:

> A codename for the product. This is almost certainly different from the actual product name, which is helpful for discussions with the outside world before we've gotten trademark on the real name, etc. This also helps confuse the media before we're ready to announce. Do you have any preferences? Your favorite bird? The name of your sled as a child? A literary or journalistic idol?

Kinsley E-mailed back:

> How do you like "Boot"? Short and snappy. Besides the obvious computer reference, and the image of a kick in the pants, Boot is the hero of the most famous novel about journalism, "Scoop," by Evelyn Waugh.

Despite his frustrations, Kinsley was happy with the career choice he had made. There was an easy rapport in the office. On January 30th, Kinsley E-mailed Bill Flora, his art director, whose title is Visual Interface Designer:

> Bill, there's a site called Naked Pavement (found at www.razorfish.com/bluedot) that seems to have a version of yr idea about page numbers. Also a lot of naked people. Either of these two elements (or both) may be of interest.

By the end of January, Kinsley felt he was making some progress. He had come up with the name *Slate*. It was "crisp, clean, short, easy to remember," and suggested "toughness," Kinsley E-mailed Russ Siegelman. With the hiring of John Williams as publisher, he was able to spend more time contemplating the editorial content. Williams had worked as group manager of Content Strategy and Business Development for the Microsoft Network, as lead product manager for Microsoft Works for Windows, and as a product manager in the Consumer Division. He knew how to borrow bodies and push buttons; he assumed responsibility for steering the lawyers and delving into business matters, and, unlike most publishers, he reported to the editor.

By February 1st, the magazine was coming alive in Kinsley's mind, and, as his thoughts travelled from idea to execution, the new medium took him to unexpected places. To help navigate, he wrote a third memo, code-named Boot. The memo bulged with practical questions, which he directed to the two Bills—Barnes and Flora. Kinsley had selected a theme song he wanted played when someone got the magazine's home page or cover cartoon on the screen—Fats Waller's "You Meet the Nicest People"—and asked Barnes and Flora if they had to acquire the rights to this song. Should they change it once a month or more often? Should they have a "How to Read This Magazine" section, explaining how to read on-line? How to download in order to read it later and to save the on-line telephone charges? How to order a subscription?

The questions kept coming. Kinsley and his team planned to have hyperlinks, or highlighted words, accompany certain articles, so that readers could click on them and take, say, a detour through the origins of national health insurance. When the link allowed a reader to visit another site—say, an advertiser's—would the technology automatically remove the reader from the magazine's site (undesirable) or could they keep the reader within the magazine's frame? To minimize monotonous scrolling, should they sometimes treat a screen as a page, insisting that some features be squeezed onto a single screen? How much of an impediment was a low-speed modem for a subscriber who wanted to download art or a video clip? In book reviews, should they link a chapter of the book, allowing the reader to sample it? In movie reviews, could they run clips from the movie? How would they maintain an archive of previously published pieces? By topic? By issue?

The memo shifted from technical questions to a further refinement of Kinsley's editorial ideas, which were being infected by this new interactive medium. He wanted a weekly cartoon strip, and wondered whether it could be "moving and/or interactive in some way." Similarly, he hoped that someone like the Democratic media consultant Robert Shrum might do a feature, "Shrum's Ad of the Week," analyzing a political TV commercial and providing a window so that the reader could also watch the ad. Since the magazine offered sound, he proposed to publish a poem every week, and invite the poet to read it.

Much remained to be done before the first issue, including the recruitment of the three editors. To buy more time, in early February it was decided to postpone the inaugural issue a month, to May 31st. There were minor setbacks. Kinsley dropped the code name Boot when the natives at Microsoft reported that to Generation X the word meant "barf." When he decided to go with the name *Slate*, Microsoft's lawyers reported that "www.slate.com" was owned by a man named John Slate, who lived in the South and never used it. The lawyers would try to buy the Web address without inflating the price by revealing that they worked for Microsoft. Microsoft executives, not surprisingly, wanted to have the Microsoft brand name as part of the magazine's Web address. Kinsley and his team successfully pressed for *Slate* to be perceived as independent by having an address without the Microsoft name.

In a way, Microsoft was winning a larger battle. By March, those who saw Kinsley every day noticed that he was changing in a fundamental way. The man who had insisted that the technology was only one per cent of the attraction was finding that he was dazzled by "all the cool things you can do." He oohed when they showed him how a subscriber could read a story on Bosnia and click a map and glimpse how the geography had been altered by the war. He was enthusiastic about using sound so you could read and hear—and feel—a writer's words. He even succumbed to the idea of publishing interactive reader bulletin boards: in one E-mail he borrowed a phrase John Williams used—"the Rubber Room"—and described it as "a padded room where participants can bludgeon one another to their heart's content." Kinsley told me, "I came around that it's not just a sop to readers to have a little interaction. It's one of the most satisfying things about working for this company. You can think of something"—like having poetry read—"and you ask Bill Barnes, 'Hey, can we do that?' "

The Microsoft people were equally enthralled. Russell Siegelman says he welcomed Kinsley's resistance to the lure of technology: "We know how to do that. We needed someone who understood journalism." To them, Kinsley was proving to be a fellow-scientist who was open to new ideas. By March, instead of ascribing a one-per-cent role to technology, Kinsley said, "It's up about thirty or forty per cent."

On some things, Kinsley was implacable. To Esther Dyson's claim that a good Internet editor was "an intellectual bartender" who listened more than he spoke, Kinsley conceded only, "I have come several steps in her direction. Originally, I said no to bulletin boards. But I think Esther has the idea that this technology changes the nature of life itself. I think she's slightly carried away. Even if her vision of the Internet as a community for current users is true, it will be less true for future users. I don't want to sound like an arrogant asshole who's become an Internet fascist, but there is a reason that some people get paid as writers and some don't. I don't want to go to a restaurant and be told, 'This is a community restaurant, and the guy at the next table is cooking for you!' "

IN early March, Kinsley conscripted Jodie Allen from the Washington *Post*, where for the past six years she had been the highly regarded editor of the Sunday Outlook section. Allen says she signed on as Washington editor because she admires Kinsley and because "it was new—it was an exciting opportunity." Besides, the on-line element held a particular allure for her: "How many Mondays have I wished we could take back something we printed on Sunday?" Kinsley had already hired much of his Redmond staff, but he had not yet been able to recruit a deputy editor, and was still negotiating for a New York editor. "When you ask me what I've done the last two months, I have a hard time saying," Kinsley told me. "I call my mother every Sunday and she asks me what I've done this week. It's not like 'Crossfire,' where you're doing it each night."

He continued to be engrossed by the puzzles that the new enterprise posed. In mid-March, I watched him struggle with several of them during a Tuesday-morning staff meeting in the cafeteria of Building 25. At one point, Kinsley said, "My original idea was that the magazine would close the less urgent stuff first"—the reviews, and other material that often falls under the heading "back of the book." He continued, "My view is that we should post material earlier in the week when it was done. So the idea is that if you log on anytime during the week you'll get a whole week's worth of stuff. Although we publish on Friday night, there will

FALLOUT
We won't eat for a month, but at least we have these Kennedy toast tongs!
You'll be attending a nice community college - but you'll always have this Kennedy folding chair.
Look at it this way: it was either your trust fund or this Kennedy paperweight.
We had to sell the house, so we'll be moving in with you, Miss Proud Owner of a Kennedy Travel Iron!

"What's it like to have sexually active parents?"

be something different every day. If we post a new book review, it would replace the old review, even if we post it on Monday."

The problem with that, Bill Barnes said, his sandals stretched under the Formica table, is that some readers would miss the review that was yanked.

"I'm not sure the benefits outweigh the confusion," John Williams said.

"It's good if we publish stuff as it's ready," Barnes said. "But it's not good if we erase last week's issue because we have an early close in, say, the arts."

"It will require some new behavior on the part of readers," countered Kinsley, now cast as the nontraditional champion of technology.

"Why not post both—what's the disadvantage?" asked Betsy Davis, the production manager. "If we keep changing stuff in the old edition, how will the reader know what's new?"

"I'm amenable to saying 'Keep the whole edition all week,' " Kinsley said. "But if you add it all up it gets a little long. And what do we do with the table of contents?"

"I may be anal, but I like the idea that I have read the whole magazine," said Davis, who has worked at the company for twelve and a half years.

"It rubs me the wrong way," Barnes said, also chiming in on the side of traditionalists. It offended him that readers might miss something simply because they called up the magazine on a Wednesday.

Kinsley reminded them that they were in a new business: "We're looking for ways to leverage our differences with other magazines. One of our advantages is that the reader can get our reviews 'hot off the press.' "

"Why not a daily magazine, then?" Barnes asked, echoing a question he had asked Kinsley in a March 8th E-mail devoted to whether they were publishing a weekly or a constantly updatable magazine. Instead of addressing this larger issue directly, Kinsley told the staff that he wanted to make use of the magazine's advantages as an electronic publication.

Barnes asked if Kinsley planned to update the printed version of the magazine that would close and be mailed on Fridays.

No, Kinsley said. The projected forty-eight-page printed version would be like a regular weekly magazine.

None of these issues were resolved at this meeting, which lasted a couple of hours, and the discussion only left them in murkier waters. They could, for example, technically update a customer's copy of the magazine by noting whether the reader had already logged on for the new issue. But Barnes asked after the meeting, "How do we know what a person has read or not read?" What if the subscriber scanned the magazine but did not read it? Or didn't finish it, and now it was gone? And if they were constantly updating an issue, as Kinsley asked Barnes in one E-mail exchange, how would they then date the magazine?

Later on the day of the meeting, Kinsley used E-mail to summarize for the staff their discussion about posting daily or just weekly, and he concluded:

> We will still "go to press" once a week, on Friday afternoon, in that (1) this is when our paper version will publish; (2) this is when our print-it-yourself version will be made available, and won't change throughout the week; (3) this is when our most timely features will close and be posted. But certain other features, such as the reviews, will be replaced on other days, on a regular schedule. People who are most interested in, say, the book review will know they can read it "hot" on, say, Monday or Tuesday. People who want to read last Friday's edition exactly as published last Friday can get it out of the archive.

Kinsley knew that this summary would trigger a torrent of E-mail, and he welcomed it. But it would not resolve the larger "philosophical issue" Bill Barnes had referred to: Would what was published be a weekly or a continuous magazine?

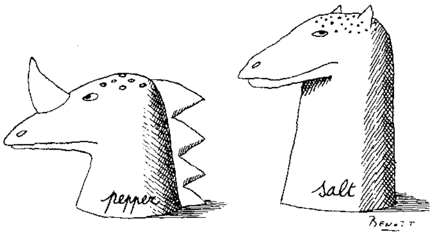
THE business problems were no less daunting. Most print magazines generate the bulk of their revenues from advertising rather than from circulation. Yet with scant experience to rely on, the publisher John Williams admitted that "it's not clear how the revenue streams will break out." Microsoft was upgrading the software, and Williams expected that by March the company would be able to securely accept credit-card numbers and bill customers from Day One. He had no way of knowing whether there would be customers for Kinsley's product, since anything so new involved guesswork. "It's like asking someone who never had a car whether he'd like one," he said. One problem was resolved by March: the magazine would have an ad on each of what would arbitrarily be called a page, and would charge more for ads that appeared on the top of a page.

Then there were the larger, more philosophical things. Kinsley and his team, like others, are roaming the dark side of the moon, trying to avoid the menacing cultural, business, and editorial craters. Apart from the question of charging subscribers, there is another cultural crater—what may be the duelling assumptions of his magazine and the Internet. The two are at war, Jim Albrecht, the deputy editor of *Mr. Showbiz* (www.mrshowbiz.com.), asserts. "The difference between an Internet design and a magazine design is not bells and whistles," he says. "It's about how you get the information. In a magazine, you get what's in that issue. In a Web site, people get what they want." This is an extension of Esther Dyson's argument that an editor must be an intellectual bartender. The Internet is personal. It is about me, and Kinsley's magazine is about him.

Indeed, CompuServe has a new on-line product—called Wow!—that invites users to customize by clicking next to "My News," "My Mail," "My Places." Microsoft Network News, which is housed in a large, open newsroom around the corner from Kinsley's office, is perfecting personalized software tools of a kind that Kinsley abhors. When Steve Forbes made a flat-tax proposal the centerpiece of his quest for the Republican Presidential nomination, the Microsoft newsroom, with the help of the accounting firm of Arthur Andersen, devised an interactive form. Individuals could type in a few figures—income, approximate deductions, etc.—and the screen would instantly announce how much you would pay in taxes under the Forbes plan versus the current tax law. Some people see this tool as advancing the trend in journalism toward "news you can use," by giving individuals vital information with which to make intelligent choices. To Kinsley, however, "all these how-it-affects-you things bother me because they play into what's wrong with American politics, which is that too many people take the short-term, selfish view." What if the Forbes plan is good for you, he asks, and bad for the country? "One of the bad things about E-mail is that it's too easy to reach your congressman!" But if the customer insists, Kinsley will become just another talented entrepreneur who guessed wrong.

The dark side of the on-line moon contains other business-editorial craters. Journalism's traditional church-state wall, the one that acts as a stop sign to an ad salesman who would like to suggest a story or urge a reporter to indulge a big advertiser, has not yet been erected in cyberspace. And current trends may work against such walls. "The most popular Web sites are run by corporations," Kinsley notes. "The Pepsi Web site is the most popular. It's like the early days of television." In those days—and, increasingly, in TV's present—advertisers both sponsored and produced programs, weaving their products into the show. So we now bump into hidden ads. If a subscriber summons the magazine *Salon* on the Internet, and clicks the "shop" icon at the end of ten books reviewed in the "Sneak Peeks" section of each issue, he can order one of those books from a Borders book store. Since *Salon's* publisher refers to Borders as one of the magazine's "marketing partners," Kinsley asks, "Is that too close a nexus of editorial and advertising? I'm not sure. It makes me a little edgy." And, since Borders wants to sell books, will it exert pressure on *Salon* to publish only positive book reviews?

Another instance of a conflict between technology and journalism may be news packagers like Microsoft Network News, soon to merge its on-line efforts with NBC News. At Microsoft, the rows of editors who work at computer screens labor over news stories supplied by what the news director Andy Beers says are "content providers," which "we edit and then add multimedia elements"—video, audio, music, pictures, personalized interactive features (like how the Forbes tax cut would affect *you*). Every three hours, the editors update stories off the news wires, and in a typical day, he says, they will condense and add "multimedia elements" to a hundred and sixty stories. What they don't provide is original reporting. "The editor operates more in the model of a television producer," Beers says. But his editors don't leave the office. So as the editor gets more distant from the news, and comes to view the news as stories that best lend themselves to a multimedia package, inevitably the package may become more important than the content.



Still another crater: corporate gigantism, which can also vie with journalism. The favored buzzwords at communications companies like Microsoft and Disney and Viacom and Time Warner and A.T. & T. and News Corporation are "synergy" and "leverage." Microsoft, for example, seems to announce an alliance a day, and has already formed partnerships with NBC to produce news, with M.C.I. to provide Internet access, with Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation to promote Windows 95 in his London newspapers, with John Malone's Tele-Communications, Inc., to offer a new cable channel that is dedicated to the personal-computer market, with America Online to exchange access to Microsoft's Internet Explorer browser in return for making AOL available to users of Microsoft software, with Hughes Electronics to deliver DirecTV satellite services, with DreamWorks SKG to create interactive games. The resultant back-scratching need not take the sinister form of censorship imposed from the top but, rather, the more subtle form of self-censorship: *If we do this story we hurt the company, and maybe ourselves.* Kinsley says he's raised all these questions with Microsoft, and adds, "I got all the right noises. It's in Microsoft's interest. They want to be a media company. They understand you've got to have credibility." They understand now, when the magazine is an abstraction. But what happens, as Kinsley asked before he accepted the job, when he attacks their friends? Or their business interests clash with their editorial interests? This is uncharted terrain for Microsoft.

FOR Kinsley, pesky business problems kept intruding, and sometimes pitted him against his staff. On March 14th, he huddled knee to knee in his office with John Williams to review the budget presentation that Williams, accompanied by Kinsley, would make to Russell Siegelman at one o'clock that day. Looking over the numbers that Williams had prepared, Kinsley appeared placid, except for those unblinking eyes. He skipped over the money set aside for the next three years' editorial budget and homed in on what he thought were profligate expenses for marketing and public relations. "This is what I wanted to get away from," he told Williams.

"You want to put this magazine out there and just expect people to come?" Williams asked. He refused to cede the high ground to Kinsley, believing this part of his brain was still controlled by a reflexive, knee-jerk traditionalist.

"We'll get a lot of free press," Kinsley countered, so why spend the money?

"You've got to spend to get customers," Williams said. To help launch the magazine, they needed mailings, and targeted E-mail, and ads, and a P.R. firm.

Kinsley said that he'd like to slim down those numbers, although he realized that there was too little time to do it before their meeting with Siegelman.

"It's a stupid exercise," said Williams, holding his ground. "You can't assume people will find us on their own."

"I'm not pretending we do nothing," Kinsley said.

"You still need someone to make press calls," Williams said. "P.R. is not enough. It dies after two weeks." Williams said they needed a launch party and ads and people to field press calls so that Kinsley didn't have to do those things himself and could focus on editing and writing.

But on the subject of promotion Kinsley was an unshakable Luddite. "The typical way a magazine fails," he said, "is they create enormous expenses in P.R. and parties."

Williams thought that *Slate's* over-all budget (a corporate secret) was modest, and said he expected to turn a profit in the third year.

"Every magazine says they're going to turn a profit in the third year," Kinsley said. "It seems to me we're spending too much money for things we can leverage free. And, if we spend, it will be harder to reach a profit."

It was all made-up, conjectural numbers, anyway, Williams cautioned.

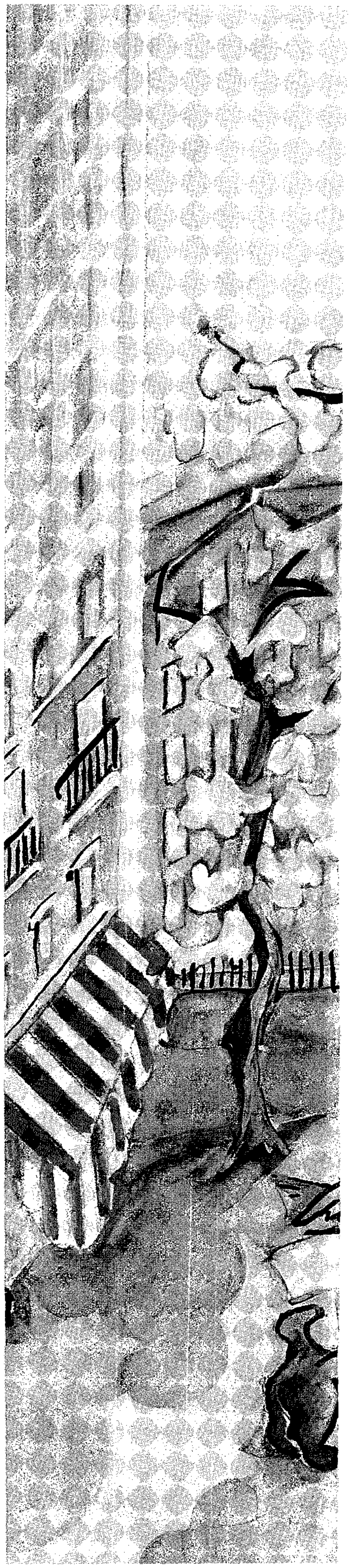
"The revenue numbers are made up," Kinsley argued. "The expenditures are not."

They were going around in circles, and Kinsley suggested that they end the discussion. Let Williams present the numbers to Siegelman in a few hours and they could cut the budget later.

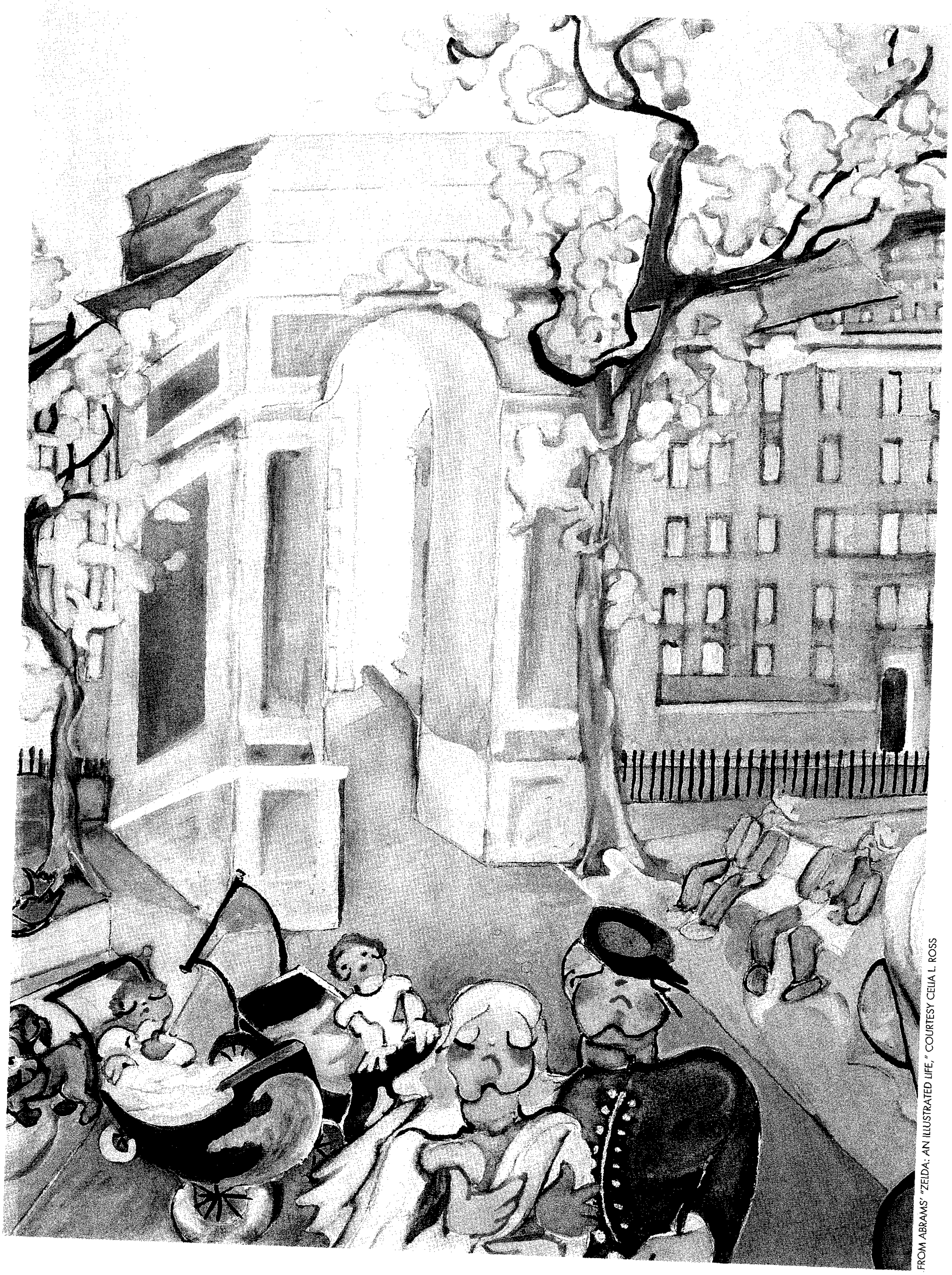
"It's important for Russ to understand where our differences are," Williams said, as he took his budget sheets back to his computer, leaving Kinsley at his desk, his khakis pulled up to mid-calf so that his white socks were fully visible. Kinsley sighed, and said, "I don't know to what extent I should give in. It's Microsoft's money . . . I always dreamed if I ever started a magazine I'd take a pot of money and say, 'Let's put out the first issue and sell ten copies. And let us find our natural audience and save a pot of money to put out more issues.' Maybe that's a crazy idea, but that's what I imagined."

The meeting with Siegelman took place in his third-floor conference room, with him and Williams on one side of a long table and Kinsley sitting across from them. As the general manager for all Microsoft's on-line services, Siegelman was the executive who signed off on Kinsley's budget. Siegelman, with curly hair, orange-and-black-laced hiking boots, and youth and open enthusiasm for this project, was a comforting figure to Kinsley. Every time Siegelman says he cares more about *Slate's* becoming "a model Web site" than he does

ZELDA



The evolution of Zelda Fitzgerald—from high-living, unstable wife of Scott to frustrated-feminist icon—may undergo further revision, to accomplished minor artist, with the publication this month of "Zelda: An Illustrated Life" (Abrams). The volume reproduces eighty of Zelda's surviving paintings—figures, still-lifes, Biblical tableaux—and many of the intricate paper dolls that she made for her grandson before her death, in 1948. Eight years earlier, following her husband's death, Zelda began a series of romantic cityscapes of New York and Paris, one of which, "Washington Square" (1944), is shown here. A gouache on paper, it was done shortly after the wedding of her daughter, Scottie—a time that, Zelda wrote to a friend, "brought back the excitement of those days twenty years ago when there was so much of everything adrift on the micaed spring time and so many aspirations afloat on the lethal twilights that one's greatest concern was which taxi to take and which magazine to sell to."



FROM ABRAMS' "ZELDA: AN ILLUSTRATED LIFE," COURTESY CELIA L. ROSS about how many subscribers they initially attract, or laughs off what he expects will be a Kinsley punch at Microsoft—"He'll probably do that in issue No. 1!"—he cements his stature with Kinsley.

Williams began the meeting by presenting their circulation and revenue projections. Within three years, he said, they hoped to about match *The New Republic's* paid circulation (a hundred thousand), and expected that eventually the bulk of their revenues would come from advertisers, many of whom would advertise not because they could precisely identify the audience but because of their "psychographic" interest in being associated with a brand (Kinsley). But *Slate* was also relying on something else: the largesse of the very folks Kinsley often attacks—lobbyists.

"The biggest issue here is: Can we attract PAC money?" Williams said.

"Not just PACs. Trade associations," added Kinsley, now spinning himself. "You don't mean PACs at all. You mean the trade associations." It was a distinction without a difference.

The subject got around to marketing, including the budget for public relations. As Williams spoke and Kinsley was silent, Siegelman knew enough to tweak a debate. "Speak up, Mr. Kinsley," he said.

"We're not entirely in synch," Williams volunteered.

"What's the issue?" Siegelman asked.

Public relations, Williams answered.

Why pay for free press? Kinsley countered.

Is it in Microsoft's interest to attract intense press interest for the first issue, Siegelman asked, or would it be better to wait until the staff got "the kinks out"?

"You can't say to Jay Leno, 'Put Kinsley on for the second-month anniversary,' " Kinsley said.

"There'll be a lot of buzz on it in May," Williams said. "We're keeping the lid on what this is."

"It's easy," Kinsley said. "We don't know what it is!"

They came back to the marketing costs associated with a May début. Williams proposed that they launch the magazine with a party in Washington, D.C.

"That's just the kind of thing I don't *want to* do," Kinsley said, and he argued that it was a waste of time and money. "What you get out of it is a piece in the Style section anyway. And it's embarrassing to me, personally."

Williams said it wasn't a waste, since they would invite journalists, present the magazine's plans, and entertain questions.

"I'd rather send the journalists a mailing," Kinsley said.

They agreed to defer this particular matter and instead returned to the marketing budget, starting with public relations. Siegelman said he thought the figure budgeted was discreet, but Kinsley demurred: "I have a special problem with P.R. for a journalism product. P.R. is about spin, and our message is that we are cutting through spin."

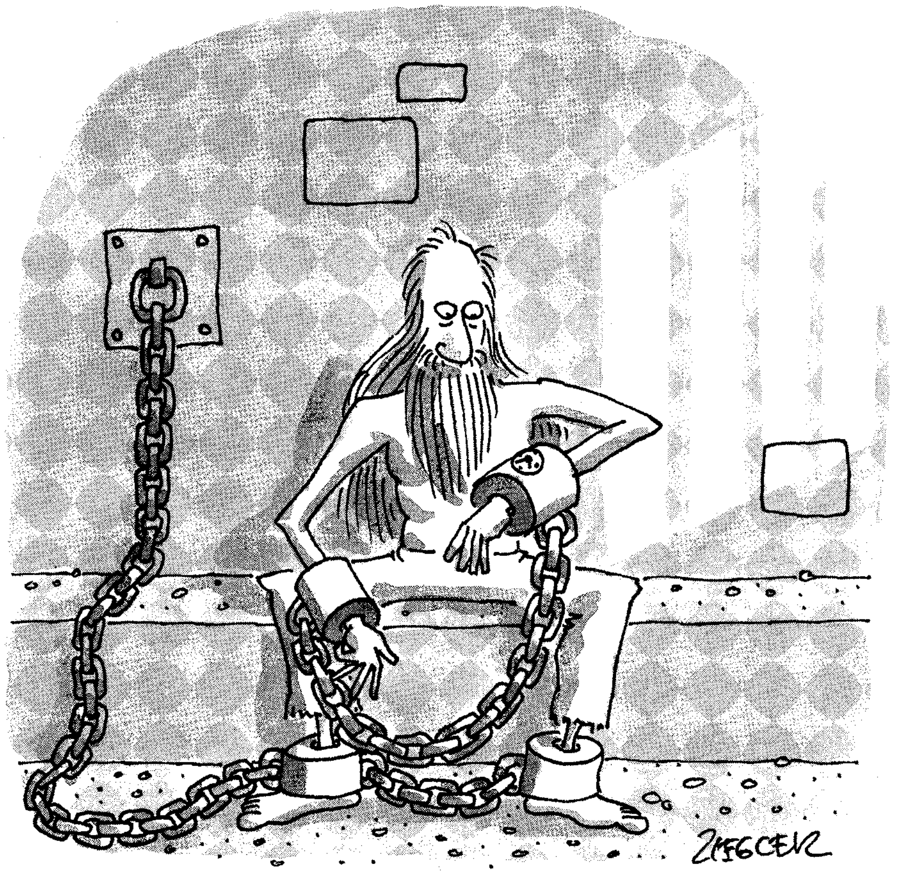
"When magazines call and want to find out what this is about, whom do they call?" Siegelman inquired, and he added that they would need statements and facts and some background on Kinsley and the magazine. That took time. And professionals.

"Assign an interne to do it," countered Kinsley, who wouldn't budge.

"So you just want to hire nonprofessional P.R. people to do P.R.," Williams responded.

At this point, Siegelman stepped in and ruled: If Kinsley feels a decision "impacts his product," he intoned, "my rule is that Mike rules."

Afterward, Kinsley had reason to be pleased. His twenty-month stay at *Harper's* had featured fractious battles with the chairman of the board. Although under him *Harper's* had won a National Magazine Award for general excellence, the board scolded and briefly suspended him for accepting a policy-oriented junket to Israel, and he embarrassingly whined in a letter to the board about his meagre salary and "ordinary one-bedroom apartment in an unfashionable neighborhood." At *The New Republic*, money was always a problem. The magazine continued to lose money under his tutelage, though circulation rose slightly. And although he was a close friend of the owner, Martin Peretz, he had not been free to make marketing decisions, or fully free to set the editorial line (especially on such subjects as Israel), or to make hiring and firing decisions on his own, or to control the back-of-the-book sections. Now he already had *enormous freedom*, a publisher who reported to him, and a good feeling about Microsoft. "The one thing I don't question is: Is Microsoft behind this?" he told me. It didn't perturb him that he had not yet met Bill Gates. And, reflecting on the meeting in Siegelman's conference room, Kinsley said of John Williams, "I hope I didn't hurt his feelings. I think he's doing a great job. He's been on board a month and a half. Look how far he's progressed."



MORNING SONG

He speaks:
Come, my laid lady, whom I wooed with words,
And called my Star—
Since you proved that you loved me, I
Know what you are.

For, knowing what I am, I have a rod
To measure by—
If you mistake what I gave you for love, you are
More beast than I.

And having eased in you my ambiguous lusts
I now can prove
That you're a dupe who let me wallow you
And call it love.

If I have feet of clay, yet you are now
The dirt they trod—
And in that moment when I brought you down,
I was a god!

—Katharine Anne Porter

In truth, they had not, together, progressed far enough, for it was already mid-March and they were behind schedule. Kinsley needed to spend time matching writers and stories, and developing a bank of pieces to fill the magazine in June and July. He told me that he planned to entice writers by claiming that pieces in *Slate* would generate "buzz," that it was a new medium, that some pieces could be published instantly, that technology could enhance their journalism. "And," he added, "in some cases I'm going to beg, which is also an editorial tradition."

By April, the lawyers had secured the Web address for the name *Slate*, and Kinsley had hired his other top editors: Jack Shafer, the former editor of the *City Paper*, in Washington, D.C., and most recently editor of the San Francisco *Weekly*, would become his deputy in Redmond; Judith Shulevitz, the former editor of *Lingua Franca* and deputy editor of *New York*, would supervise the Gotham office and much of the arts coverage; Jodie Allen would start work as the Washington editor on May 1st. In addition, he had signed up Herbert Stein, who had been the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers under President Nixon, as moderator of *Slate's* upscale electronic version of the "McLaughlin Group," and, Kinsley said, Mark Alan Stamaty, who draws "Washingtoon," was "ninety-nine per cent" certain to join as the magazine's cartoonist. To buy two more weeks, Kinsley pushed back the inaugural issue to June 14th. And he had scaled down the expensive public-relations campaign and would rely on Microsoft's local P.R. firm to perform what he called "almost secretarial duties." When he rejected the idea of a big Washington, D.C., launch party, he said, "It's supposed to be in cyberspace. Why do I have to go to Washington?"

Also in April, Russ Siegelman left the job of running the Microsoft Network, but Kinsley was relieved to know that he would retain responsibility for *Slate*. And, on April 8th, Kinsley at last met with Bill Gates, in a pleasant hour-and-a-half discussion of the magazine. Gates was full of questions, according to Siegelman, who accompanied Kinsley to the meeting. The Microsoft chairman focussed particularly, both Kinsley and Siegelman recall, on questions relating to whether the magazine was weekly or continuous: If they updated material, how would the reader know what was new and what was old? Would they date it? Would they retain the old information? Would they update the print version as well?

That same week, Kinsley also made a fairly momentous decision, one that suggested the distance he had travelled since he wrote his proposal last July for Time Warner. Kinsley remembers that, bothered by the constant back and forth over how to date the cover and how to post new pieces in the middle of the week, he had an epiphany: "This is artificial!" The Education of Michael Kinsley was nearly complete. He now decided to abandon the idea of a magazine that went to bed every Friday and replace it with a publication that would never sleep. The decision was announced in an April 9th E-mail Kinsley sent to the staff:

> In short, I propose that we embrace our destiny as a new form of journalism and abandon the conceit that any particular article or feature is attached to a particular weekly "issue." . . . Each article in the ToC [table of contents] could simply indicate the day it was posted and the day we're planning to archive it. . . . As we and the readers get used to this new form of journalism, we could abandon the one-week-up convention completely, and simply have a smorgasbord of stuff to which we add new dishes and remove old ones on no fixed schedule, but simply to keep the whole meal tasting as delicious as possible.

But, as Kinsley's ride through cyberspace cleared one obstacle, others arose. Because of the expense, he was rethinking the idea of a weekly print version of *Slate*, and was inclined to publish it monthly. By May, Kinsley had collided with the reality that this "new form of journalism" was going to remain dependent on old software that made it impossible to assure customers that their credit-card numbers would not be pirated if exchanged over the Internet. To insure customers complete security, he told me over the telephone, "we're not going to be able to bill people from Day One. We're going to have to wait a few months. The software won't be ready." Yet later the same day Kinsley E-mailed:

> The latest . . . we probably WILL be able to charge from the beginning or very near it. At any rate, we still plan to charge as soon as possible.

I then E-mailed:

> Are you "spinning" me? If Carville & Co. sent me such an e-mail I'd interpret it this way: trying to figure way to charge from day one, but unlikely; what is likely is what Kinsley said earlier . . . we'll probably charge by August.

Kinsley E-mailed back:

> Let me "respin." We're going to charge as soon as it's technologically possible. . . . It looks now like we'll have to give it away for a month or so (ie, until July).

A small crater, perhaps, but just one of many lurking in cyberspace. ♦

PERSONAL HISTORY

MY MOTHER THE ZIEGFELD GIRL

What was a Ziegfeld girl about? Taking a hard life and turning it into a world of fun and glamour—a goal that made for a very interesting sort of mother.

BY JOHN LAHR

My mother, who was known to the world for over fifty years as Mrs. Bert Lahr, died at the age of eighty-eight last December. Her first name was Mildred, but in her declining years my sister, Jane, and I called her Millie, a diminutive she'd detested in her prime but came to enjoy in old age, since it summoned up the carefree, gallant part of her—the part that had caused her to douse herself for years with only one fragrance, "Joy," and to insist on having her ashes dropped in the foothills of Reno. There, in 1937, on a dude ranch, she spent what she said were the happiest six months of her life, while she was in the process of getting divorced from her first husband but was not yet married to my father.

Millie was a former Ziegfeld girl, who invented a world for her great blond beauty to inhabit—a world of happy times. "I had fun," she'd say, reviewing her life, and she did. El Morocco, the Stork Club, the Colony Club. Havana, Palm Beach, Palm Springs, Beverly Hills. She was born on Valentine's Day in Cincinnati, in 1907, the second of four children of Helen and Edgar Schroeder—a hairdresser and an engineer. But she was abandoned, first by her father, who left the family when she was small, and then by her mother, who couldn't afford to keep her. So "fun," when she finally achieved it in adulthood, was a hard-won destiny—a kind of trophy for her will power. Even in doddering old age, when she was reduced to shrugs and scrambled simple sentences, Millie made a show of frivolity. She'd stand by the elevator outside her fourteenth-floor midtown apartment and ask me, "Wanna dance?" And we did, on the hallway's stale russet carpet. She'd laugh and laugh, and to see Mom laugh was the best. At those times, she seemed to ask nothing of the world except that it make her smile. Later, when she had trouble getting out of her armchair, she'd ask her caretakers to pull her to her feet and dance with her, to the music on her cassette player, which sat on a lacquered black table beside her. She loved Satchmo and Ella Fitzgerald, especially when they sang Cole Porter. Mom and Dad had lived on the same floor of the Waldorf Towers as Porter in 1940, when they were first married and Dad was starring with Ethel Merman in Porter's "Du Barry Was a Lady." Armstrong, Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman: the people Millie liked to dance to in the solitude of her room were people she'd met in public when the whole world seemed to find its way to her table.

"I can tell you for sure—it's a *bitch* getting old," she wrote me in 1981, when she was seventy-four. "I had four calls yesterday and everyone talked about their problems—I decided to listen and say *nothing*. I loathe those *types* of calls. Nuff of that." Beauty is the promise of happiness, and to the end of her days Millie lived by beauty's harsh discipline. Life's blemishes had to be hidden away at all costs. At eighty-eight, she still had ten different Estée Lauder lipsticks in her bathroom, and she refused to go out without gloves to hide the liver spots on her hands, which betrayed the age she could no longer remember. Often, when Jane and I took her to dinner, strangers would approach the table to compliment Millie on her beauty, and though she was by then too deaf and confused to understand much, she would hold her head high as Florenz Ziegfeld had taught her and flash her iconic smile. "The Ziegfeld strut," as it was called, was a way of behaving in the proximity of the paying customers to create a sense of aloofness and decorum—to appear at once unattainable and irresistible—and Millie carried it off. She liked to be entertained but didn't entertain; she liked to be fed but wouldn't feed; she liked to be kissed but didn't embrace. Her stock phrase, repeated throughout my childhood, was "Does a mother have to ask for a kiss?" It was almost a command—as if affection were the duty we children owed someone so perfectly formed and so perfectly placed as she. When she was being regal, it was fun to tease her: her backbone would stiffen, and her chin would rise, but her eyes would be shining as she said, "It ain't funny, McGee"—or, even better, brandishing the back of her hand, "You fresh mutt." And once Mom's mask of stature dropped, she showed off a spirited impertinence—when, for example, Dad chased her, nude and squealing, into the bathroom with his Polaroid camera ("Bert, don't you dare!"), or when he tried to goad her into an argument about the roast beef ("You call this meat? This is petrified wood!") so that the tape recorder he'd hidden under the dinner table could capture her curses.

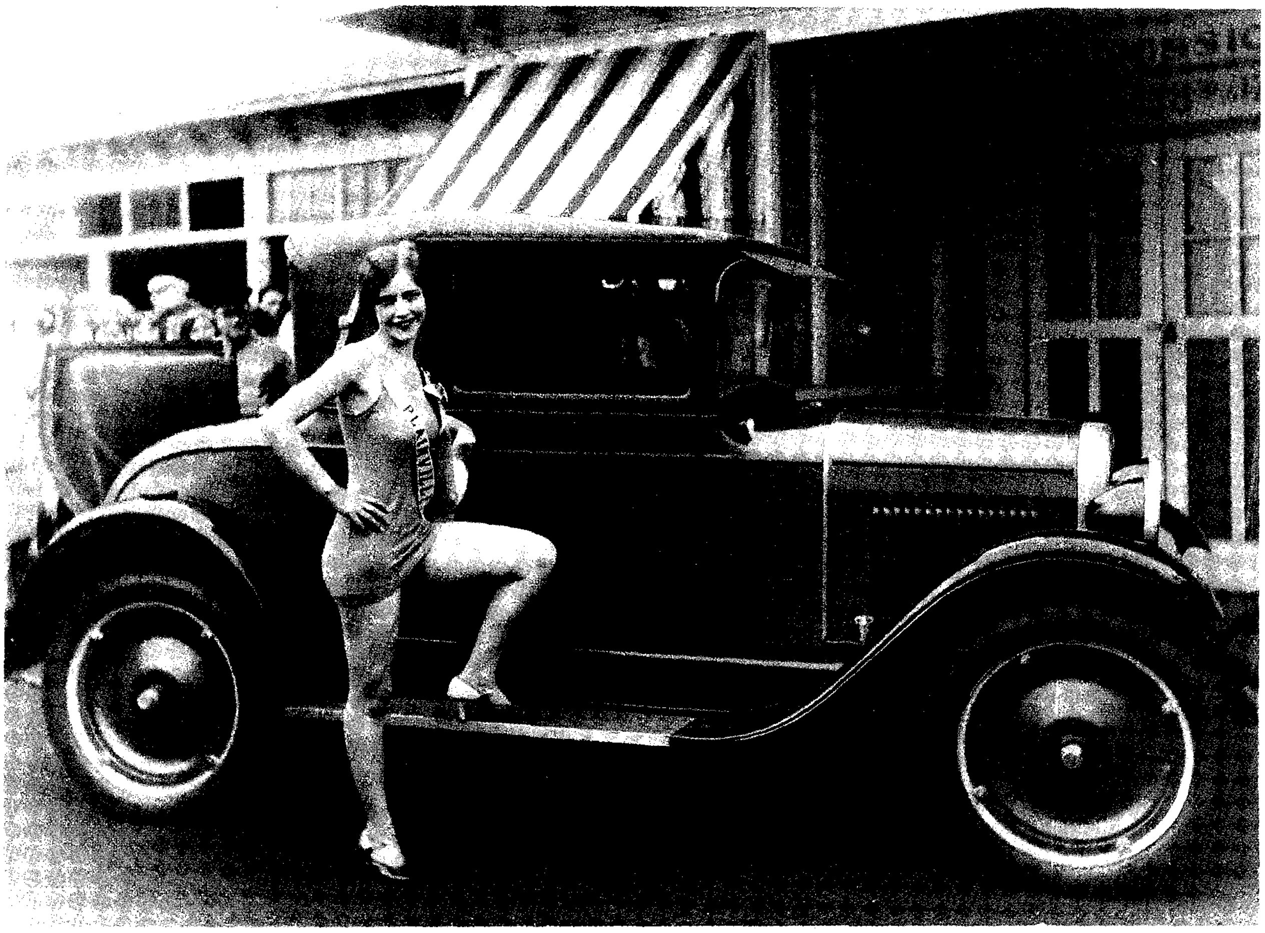
Even in her heyday, my mother didn't say much or have much to say, and her reticence about herself magnified the illusion of her never being at a loss. In almost all the family photos through the decades, she is perfectly composed: feet arranged in third position, teeth gleaming between full lips turned up at the corners from forming the word "Yippee!" Beauty was her capital, and she invested it shrewdly. "She never opened flowers unless there was jewelry in them," said Eve Bealey, another Ziegfeld girl, who roomed with Millie at the St. Regis Hotel when they were chorines together. Mom's looks got her groped under the table by Ernest Hemingway on a yacht in Bimini ("He got a fork in his hand for his trouble,"

PHOTOGRAPH FROM THE AUTHOR'S FAMILY ALBUM

Millie and Bert Lahr in the fifties. She was his "Miss Pep," and he was her powerful protector.

she said) and earned her a marriage proposal from Winthrop Rockefeller. She never lost faith in her incandescence. "I was the prettiest woman in the room," she startled me by saying once in the late seventies, as we emerged from a party of younger folks. She liked to recall a night in the early thirties when, in evening clothes, she and Dad strolled home from Tavern on the Green across the Sheep Meadow in Central Park. A group of dispossessed men warming themselves over a garbage-can fire waved to her and Dad as they passed. "Weren't they angry at the sight of you?" I asked. "No," Millie said. "We gave them hope."

Millie's glamour clearly gave *her* hope. "To get her picture in the papers is the more or less harmless ambition of many a girl who leads a remote and routine existence in a factory or in a general or department store or even on a farm," Ziegfeld wrote in the *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1923, when Millie was a teenager. "If her worth and beauty were only known! Or if, like Cinderella, she could only get to the party somehow!" Millie got to the party by the end of the twenties, but her teen-age years, she wrote in "Grandmother Remembers," a fill-in book she started but never completed for Jane's daughter Maya, were "miserable." Millie refused to discuss her past in detail, but the outline of her story was grim enough. She had been fobbed off by her mother onto nuns in a convent, then forced to live with strict grandparents, who, she claimed, treated her like a servant. Her education had been uneven. Once, sitting in a West Side restaurant on a summer afternoon in the late seventies, she told me, "I remember, when I was in the convent, going off by myself and sitting on a hill and wondering if anybody would come to get me. They didn't." Tears streamed down her cheeks as she continued, "I never told your father any of this. I wanted to forget about it. Anyway, he never asked." She said she escaped from the convent with a girlfriend by climbing down a ladder of knotted sheets. It was not the first or the last of Millie's attempts to escape Cincinnati and her circumstances. When she was about ten, her mother was hoping to have her adopted by the formidable and childless Washington grande dame Alice Roosevelt Longworth: the Longworths were a Cincinnati family, and this was before Mrs. Longworth finally had a child of her own, in 1925. In a special photograph that was sent to Mrs. Longworth, Millie is a picture of Edwardian sobriety and industry: high-buttoned shoes, hair held together by a white bow, hands resting on an open book, modest smile calibrated to show character but not eagerness. My mother kept that photograph, along with tattered press clippings and other snapshots of the past, which she would rarely discuss, in a box under her bed. In her story, only Mrs. Longworth's pregnancy prevented Mom from becoming a Roosevelt (though Mom would have been seventeen by then and thus hardly a candidate for adoption). Instead, in time, she aligned herself with the democracy's substitute for aristocracy: celebrity.



In the late twenties, Millie won the Miss Cincinnati title and a new Chevrolet. She had the world positioned exactly as she liked it: at arm's length and at total attention.

Millie, who was intellectually uncertain about so many things, spoke with absolute authority about the imperialism of fame: she once upbraided me for letting my friends call me Lahrheim, which was Dad's original name. (He changed it by deed poll in 1959.) "Your name is Lahr," Millie insisted over tea. "Face it, Mom," I said. "You were married to one of the great Jewish entertainers." Millie folded her napkin carefully in front of her and fixed me with a look. "John, your father was not Jewish," she said. "He was a star."

When Millie engineered her getaway from Cincinnati, it was not as a prim image of Edwardian propriety but as a semi-nude totem of the Jazz Age, modelling the symbols of American womanhood's new mobility—knee-length skirts, skimpy swimsuits, ankle bracelets, and cars. My favorite picture in the box under the bed shows Millie in the Miss Cincinnati contest, on a sweltering Midwestern afternoon: with hands on hips, she struts by the side of a municipal swimming pool, towering above the heads of an ogling, mostly male crowd and the coatless judges, who sprawl on chairs. I can tell by the pitch of Millie's smile that she's relaxed and confident in this arena. Here, at least, she has no responsibility but to be, and she has the world positioned exactly as she liked it: at arm's length and at total attention.

"A VERY excited young lady arrived in New York today," said a Pathé press release dated July 18, 1929. "She is Miss Mildred Schroeder who was declared the winner of the 'Pathé Pretties' beauty show for which she was awarded a cash prize, a trip to New York with all expenses paid, and a role in George Le Maire's new comedy 'Barbers' College.' " Millie was twenty-two when she got to Manhattan. She quickly discovered that with the thrill of new possibilities came new terrors. "If you only had one good dress and one pair of shoes, a spot on the dress or the heel breaking was a disaster—a real disaster," she told me. "You didn't want to feel ever again that life was so precarious." But she was lucky. Earl Carroll almost immediately put her on Broadway in the chorus of his "Vanities," and she followed that with a part in "Fine and Dandy" (1930). She then appeared in "George White's Scandals of 1931," which is where Dad first saw her. They met officially four months later, at a penthouse party given by George White, where Millie's sincerity and her nervousness (she was twisting a handkerchief) attracted the sensationally nervous comedian.

Around that time, Millie had her horoscope done. The typed, thirty-four-page booklet was still in her desk when she died. "You are not only a child of DESTINY, but also one of OPPORTUNITY," the closing pages read. Although Bert Lahr was nearly forty—his wife and former vaudeville partner, Mercedes, was in a mental home, and their son, Herbert, was farmed out to an aunt in Arizona—Millie, always a curious mixture of propriety and pragmatism, seized her moment. "I never believed in marrying an actor," Millie told me when I wrote "Notes on a Cowardly Lion." "I thought that one should marry a businessman. I found Bert so different from my picture of an actor. He was a shy person, and that, I think, attracted me. I think he gave me his number, and I think I called him." They became inseparable. Millie's smile worked its charm; and Dad found it hard to begrudge Millie anything. He set her up in an apartment at 25 Central Park West with a maid aptly named Peace Determination. In 1936, when Dad claimed he couldn't get a divorce from Mercedes, Millie gave him six weeks and then sent him a wire: "WAS MARRIED TODAY SATURDAY TO MR JOSEPH ROBINSON ATTORNEY WE ARE ABOUT TO SET SAIL ON OUR HONEYMOON SOON WILL BE AT SEA AND BERT I LOVE YOU AND HAVE A GREAT ADMIRATION FOR YOU AS ONE MIGHT HAVE FOR A FATHER NOT A HUSBAND SO ON THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT DECIDED TO GET MARRIED."

Millie and Robinson had a nine-day honeymoon in Cuba. When she returned, Dad was suicidal, and pressure from the theatrical community was enormous. There were private detectives, threatened lawsuits, fierce confrontations—and after six weeks Millie caved in. "I could not find happiness with you," she wrote to "Robby," and proceeded to divorce him; Dad, whom the press branded a "love thief," eventually obtained one of the first divorces in New York State on the ground of incurable mental illness. Over their twenty-seven-year marriage, Millie often regretted her decision out loud to us, although the scandalous breakup with Robinson was not mentioned until I began research for Dad's biography, in the mid-sixties. "You *can* love two men at the same time," Millie told Susan Shamroy, a young actress who roomed with her for a while after Dad died, in 1967. She had kept her love letters to Robinson, which he had returned to her, in the top drawer of her writing desk; when I reread them now, they give off the gushing Pollyanna scent of Mom in the thirties, when she once inscribed a photo to a girlfriend, "Oodles of love Woogie Woogie."

Another thing Millie's horoscope said was "You have extraordinary power to control the insane or those who are psychically out of balance." Certainly my chronically insecure father was emotionally off kilter. Both he and Millie, in their own ways, were inconsolable, but because Dad acted out his sadness both on and off the stage Millie was free to accentuate the positive. In taking care of Dad, Millie hid her own depression from herself. She was his "Miss Pep"; he was her powerful protector. And almost overnight Millie found herself at the big table of American life. You can hear her wonder at it all in a telegram she sent to her mother in 1932: "MOTHER DARLING AT LAST I GAZED ON THE CAPITOL STOP WASHINGTON IS A BEAUTIFUL PLACE STOP CAME ON HERE FOR BERT'S OPENING IT WAS THE BIGGEST HIT EVER KNOWN IN ZIEGFELD'S LAST TEN SHOWS." Soon thereafter, when Sam Goldwyn asked Millie and her showgirl friend Lucille Ball to come to Hollywood, Dad begged her to stay in the East, and Millie agreed. She wanted family and security above all else. While she sometimes acted with Dad in vaudeville in the off-season or on the occasional one-reeler, the production to which she gave herself wholly was the management of his comic genius. She was the sounding board, the butler, the babe, the keeper of the scrapbook and the flame. She got Dad to make regular contact with his first wife and their son; she encouraged him to début "Waiting for Godot" on Broadway; she remembered people's names, which Dad habitually forgot. She created a climate of buoyancy around Dad's gloomy, impossible self-involvement and connected him to the real world; he, in turn, connected her to fame's adolescent fantasy of having everything all the time.

Millie knew most of the movers and shakers of her era, but she showed little curiosity about them. It was enough that Hemingway had made a pass at her (she didn't need to read his books); that she had dined with the phobic Howard Hughes, who met her at the door with shoeboxes on his feet (she didn't need to know the story of his fortune); that she cruised the city after closing time in Walter Winchell's car as he followed the fires and gangland rubouts that came over his police radio (she didn't really need to know about Manhattan, whose myth she and Dad were helping to make). The only history that absorbed Millie was her own. (When I called her on July 12, 1991, to tell her I'd turned fifty, she said, "How old am I?") Although she had a reputation for liveliness, she was curiously passive. She knew how to be admired but not how to be intimate. She seemed to vaguely understand this problem, although she never discussed it. On her dresser mirror she'd taped a poem by Max Dunaway called "Love":

Be it! don't just say it.
Live it! don't just pray it.
Do it! don't forget it.
Give it! don't just get it.

Mom took almost girlish delight in being swept up in the slipstream of provided pleasures. When Jane and I were growing up, in the forties and fifties, these diversions seemed to be non-stop. I remember, most nights, waiting up for Mom and Dad on the threshold of our room, touching Jane's head for "lucky sweat" to keep me safe from the awful things moving behind the curtain. (To call them "monsters" now is to trivialize the enormity of annihilation that lurked there.) The clock in the hall would strike three, then four, and sometimes five as I waited for the elevator door to clang open. When it did, I'd bolt back into bed and pretend to be asleep. Millie—always only Millie—would come in, the sound of her rustling dress preceding her, smelling of perfume and gin as she bent over to kiss us. To this day, neither Jane nor I can stand the smell of gin: the whiff of abandonment. When I confronted Mom about this in adulthood, she was nonplussed. "Your Dad wanted me with him," she said. "That was the deal." The price the famous pay for their success is other people—and in this case, that meant Jane and me. We came to see ourselves as the parents who raised *them*. Certainly, Millie never lost her childish expectation of being cared for and entertained. To the end of her days, she loved the New York skyline, the hubbub of headwaiters, the excitement of a curtain going up; and even when she was well beyond partying her first words of greeting were usually "Where are we going?"

OVER the years, the lid that Millie put on her story occasionally shifted, and things leaked out. The most sensational revelation came in the early eighties, on Shelter Island, where Millie and my own family were staying with different households. Our hostess was in the throes of a volatile love affair, and when I took her with me to pick up Millie, who was invited to dinner, we got onto the sour subject of romance.

"There's nothing wrong with romance," Millie piped up from the back seat.

"Yeah, sure. You were only married to the most unromantic man in the world."

"Who said anything about your father?" Millie said.

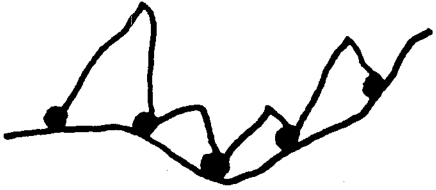
I checked Millie in my rearview mirror. "What do you mean?"

"After your last novel, John," Millie said, "do you think I'm going to tell you anything?"

I pulled over on the shoulder. "I'm not moving until you tell me what you mean."

Millie's hand played across her pearl choker. Her chin assumed the Ziegfeld tilt. "I'm going to say two words, John. And that's the end of it." She paused. We waited. "Joseph Cotten," she said.

In the decade or so that remained of her life, she could not be drawn out on the subject of Cotten, except to say, "He was a very nice man." But last year, as Mom was having her hair washed in the hospital by her hairdresser, Helen Sigiel, whom she had been going to every Friday at 3 P.M. since 1939, Helen told me, "I remember once she came in and said, 'Helen, make me look beautiful. I've got a big date.' I thought she meant your father. But it was Joseph Cotten." At the mention of Cotten, Millie looked up and smiled. Later, after Millie's funeral, Helen had more to say: "Mrs. Lahr said your father was a very selfish lover—sort of left her in the lurch, so she just met others. She went out with Joseph Cotten for a long time." Helen thought of Millie as brave, and I think she was. "She got out of life what she wanted. She just went out and got it," Helen said. Millie, who had fought so hard for a family ("You had 'em, Mildred," said Dad, who didn't want more children, "you raise 'em"), was fiercely protective of her children and of her happiness. Her close girlfriends knew of her flirtations (three more longtime relationships, including one with the actor Dean Jagger, emerged after her death), but with her children, even after we'd had our own marital chaos, Millie stayed *shtum*. Until this year, Jane could never admit to me that at the age of fifteen she and her best friend had stumbled on Mom at P. J. Clarke's having a double date with one of our fun-loving "aunts." "We'd get dressed up, and we'd go and sit and have Bacardi cocktails and pretend to be our mothers," Jane recalls. "We're in there on our regular weekend jaunt and I look up and there, at a table, is Mom and Aunt Louise with maybe three guys. They were animated, having a great time, giggling. Then I suddenly got the picture that this went on all along. We kind of snuck out. They didn't see that we'd seen them. I was devastated. I went home and cried." But in the last year of Mom's life Jane noticed that, in her babble, Mom was wrestling with the high times of her past. Once, Mom told Jane she'd had a dream about Dad, and she started to cry. "He was really very good to me. I miss him," she said, and added, "But I loved the boys."



DAD was present at our conception but was otherwise engaged. He was a friendly absence, whose support was primarily financial, but it took guile to pick his deep pockets, and Millie, who was ashamed of her lack of learning, was determined that her kids be sent to the best schools: Riverdale, Dalton, Yale, Oxford, the Slade School of Fine Art. All Dad's fee-saving suggestions were pooh-poohed by her. "John's not going to Notre Dame!" I remember her insisting when Dad announced that he'd secured my admission to the Blue and Gold after bending an elbow with the university's president at the Stork Club. "He's applying to Williams, where Foxy Sondheim's son Stephen goes," Millie told him. She had great powers of denial and therefore of idealization. "She wanted Shirley Temple," Jane says. "She got Eloise." Still, in public anyway, we were presented as pint-size bundles of abundance, who proved that the system and the family worked. Jane, who was born with a wandering eye, became perfect after an operation at the age of five; I was—well, if not the perfect son, then the perfect date. By the age of ten, I was lighting ladies' cigarettes, holding the chairs of the women next to me, tipping the hat-check girl.

Dad made his decisions unilaterally and often against Millie's vested interest. In 1943, for instance, he put the Beverly Hills house they'd built up for sale while Millie was giving birth to Jane; he didn't even consult her. He did tell her, however, as soon as she came to after her Caesarean section. But Millie's credo, and the only advice she ever gave me, was "Don't let anything get in your way." In her heyday, she was not beyond "fainting" to keep Dad's attention on her, rather than on his "Hot-Cha!" co-star, Lupe Velez, who fancied Dad and infamously wore no underwear; nor was she beyond throwing her golf clubs out the car window when Dad, a one-handicap golfer, refused to play with her. Sometimes her tantrums backfired. I remember being awakened in the late fifties by a furious row and Mom's sensational curse "Oh, Bert, go shit in a hat!" I rushed to their locked bedroom door and peeked through the keyhole. In his blue-and-red Sulka bathrobe, with the sash knotted under his beer belly, Dad was standing toe to toe with Millie, who was right up under his gherkin nose. Suddenly, Dad popped Millie one, and she dropped out of my field of vision. Dad didn't. He backpedalled to his corner, like the middleweights he liked to watch on television. He stood there bouncing on his toes and waiting for Millie to get to her feet so he could finish her off. She was down for the count.

Millie's blows tended to be indirect. She had learned from decades of living with a tyrannical star how to kill with kindness and how to deliver a full-court press of guilt. "Be careful," she said to me when I left for London in 1970—a move that she never understood or accepted. "You're the only man I have left." The subtext of Millie's lament was: I behave perfectly, I make very few demands, I hold everything in, and what do I get? This theme was spelled out when a *New Yorker* reader sent me a letter from Millie, written in 1971, that read, in part, "You never come out ahead with children no matter how hard you try. So my honest advice is to think of *yourself*—I never did and find with all the love and background I gave John and Jane, I am still very much out of their lives. C'est la vie." When taken to task for this sort of behavior, as Millie was once by my exasperated ex-wife ("You manipulated Bert! You manipulated John! You're a terrible manipulative woman!"), Millie rose grandly above the indictment. The next week, however, she took me aside. "I've looked 'manipulative' up in the dictionary, John," she said. "And I am none of those things. And what's more, you better be nice to me, because I'm not going to be around that long."

She equated the spilling of emotion with bad form, so when she got angry she would usually get very quiet. She'd say, "I'm off him!" (Or "them!" or "you!") And she was—off into some unreachable, unknowable zone of her interior. To a child, it was like death; it was scary to see her vanish before your eyes. Once, in the late forties, on the luxury train to Las Vegas, where Dad was to play the Thunderbird Hotel, they got into a bad argument in our couchette, and Millie went into one of her silences. The tension was miserable. I went into the bathroom, and came out holding my penis. "All right, you guys," I said, doing my Edward G. Robinson. "Drop the gun!" And they did—they laughed. That's how I got interested in jokes; jokes were mind-to-mind resuscitation. I learned to keep a wary eye on Mom for signs of her disappearing act, and I became expert at consolation. But sometimes you couldn't hug or joke Millie back to life. Once, after our parents had gone without speaking to each other for forty-eight hours, Jane and I sent them a telegram that read, "TALK."

Mom and Dad managed to stay together for a lifetime, but there were occasional dramatic U-turns. In June, 1965, when I was cramming for my final exams at Oxford, there was a knock at my door. I opened it, and Mom was standing before me in open-toed shoes

Victoria Roberts

"Oops! There goes another rubber-tree plant!"

• •

and her mink stole. "I've left your father," she said. Dad's first wife, Mercedes, had just died, and he'd stayed up for three nights mourning her. They'd argued; Mom walked out. After a few weeks of sulking in her tent—or rather in mine—she returned to Dad, but the issue was more definitively resolved years later, literally from beyond the grave, when a famous British medium put Millie in touch with Dad. "I asked him if he had seen Mercedes, his first wife, who has been dead for some time," Millie is quoted as saying in "Ena Twigg: Medium" (1973), in a case history called "The Return of Bert Lahr." "And Bert said No, and anyway, he told me, I was the one, I was his love. He said he'll be waiting for me when I take my step." Incidentally, Dad also delivered his editorial complaints about my nearly four-hundred-page biography of him. "He said he thought it could have been longer," Millie said.

MILLIE never married after Dad died, but she had offers. "I never wanted to cook for a man again," Millie said; she had never willingly applied heat to food in any case. She had a hard time mourning Dad, perhaps because in her conscious devotion she'd unconsciously wished him dead for so long. She moved out of our sunless Fifth Avenue apartment and into her sunless midtown apartment. She rarely entertained. She'd nod to people in her building, but she kept her distance. "First thing you know, they're inviting you to drinks, then you've got to invite them back," she said. She had her independence, her children, her name. She enjoyed being Mrs. Bert Lahr, which could still get her a good table at Sardi's and the occasional big welcome from maître d's at the expensive watering holes around town, which she could hardly afford now. Gradually, she cobbled together a quiet new life for herself: she got a job as a librarian at the Christian Science Reading Room, on Fifth Avenue at Forty-eighth Street; she went to concerts with her friends from work. When Dad was alive, she'd loved the nights; now she loved the mornings. "Darlings, I haven't any news," she wrote, signing off a letter in 1978. "Tomorrow at 5:45 A.M. will be here too soon, when I arise and pray for all of you and get dressed and stand on the corner for the bus. N.Y. is very quiet and rather interesting at that hour."

It was a brave fight for a personal, not a public, identity; and, despite Mom's earlier protests to us about how she'd got a "bad deal" from us kids, it was a journey that she had to make alone. In her old age, she seemed to me more vulnerable, more valiant, and more fun, despite her unnerving habit of wearing my high-school ring on her wedding finger and introducing me as "my hus—my son, John." She was no longer the Look Police, correcting our hair, our clothes, our methods of child-rearing. (She had once taken exception to my playing so much with my infant son, Chris. "You know, he'll never remember," she said.) As an octogenarian, she sailed into life with abandon. "I don't care," she'd say with a saucy roll of her shoulder when asked where she wanted to go; or she'd wait while something she couldn't hear or understand was painstakingly explained to her and then say, "Exactly." She remembered no names, she paid no bills, she knew no directions. Although she stopped reading, she continued up to the end to work the "à la carte" side of the menu like a champ. In the end, the big spender and the notorious demander of service had her American Express card cut before her eyes in Bloomingdale's after five months' worth of bills had gone unpaid, but she felt not a twinge of humiliation. On the other hand, she had her victories. "I live there," she'd say triumphantly when I dropped her at home after a trip to the movies, as if she'd discovered the wheel instead of her apartment building.

At the end of her life, Millie was a wave and a smile—almost heroic. She had a showgirl's sure knowledge of how to make an entrance and an exit, and she saved her most eloquent words for last. At the hospital one afternoon, she got particularly agitated and adamant. "You don't believe me," she said. "There's been an announcement. This house is closing. Now and forever. You're always so sure of yourself, John. I'm telling you, this house is closing." Although she lived three more weeks, on a respirator, she never spoke again.

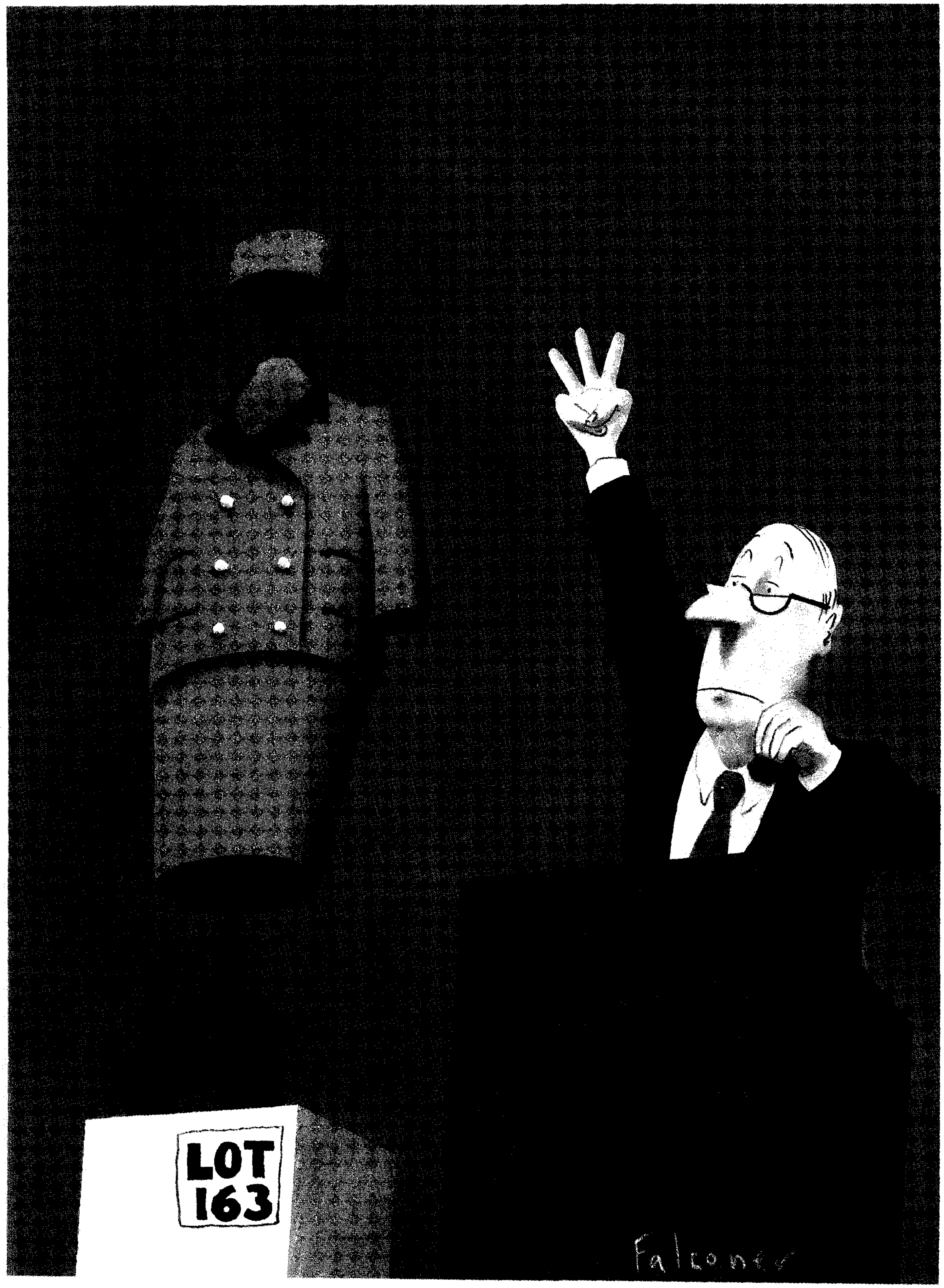
THE day after Mom died, Jane and I went to her apartment. Before she'd gone into the hospital for the last time, she had said she wanted to give me something. "What would that be?" I asked. "My blue dress," she said. I loved that answer, but I would have preferred answers of a different kind—something that would help me better understand her and how we got to be who we are. Still, I suspected that she had left something for us in the apartment. On big solo journeys, like one she took to Europe in the late fifties, Millie had handed us letters containing avowals of her love before taking off, and when I opened her desk drawer I felt even more certain of my hunch. There, positioned so we couldn't miss it, was an envelope with "My Will—This is For John and Jane" written on it in Millie's well-formed extrovert's hand.

But then we pulled her old box of photos out from under her bed, and while Jane picked through them I made a beeline for a massive mahogany chest, which, when we were growing up, had stretched the length of our parents' bedroom wall, with enough bookshelves at either side for the World Book Encyclopedia, Dad's complete edition of Samuel Pepys's diaries, and his scrapbooks. In the middle of this towering construction were five rows of small drawers, each the size of a Stilton cheese and with its own elegant china knob. In those days, the drawers were filled with mysterious things: Dad's wig, a policeman's badge, a starting pistol, his stage monocles and false mustaches, papers concerning his change of name. And in 1970, when Mom moved to her one-bedroom, the chest moved with her and came to rest in the living room.

I had to push past Millie's walker and her wheelchair to get close to it. Maybe what I'd find wasn't a letter to us. Maybe it was letters to Millie from her mother. Or love letters from Joseph Cotten. Maybe it was a childhood diary. Or something from Dad that would shed light on their thirty-six-year association. I opened the drawers slowly, starting at the bottom and moving upward from left to right. At one point, I had to clamber onto the ledge of the chest to reach the drawers at the very top, near where Mom and Dad had once hidden their dog-eared copy of "From Here to Eternity." It felt like holding on to a rock face. I tilted each high drawer out as far as I could, and then, on tiptoe, strained to feel into every corner. The drawers were all empty. ♦

SKETCHBOOK · BY IAN FALCONER

A BARGAIN AT ANY PRICE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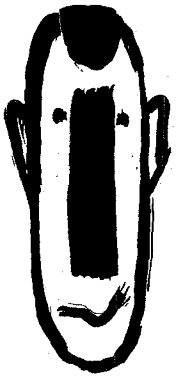
Falconer

FICTION

NOBODY IN HOLLYWOOD

BY RICHARD BAUSCH



WAS pummelled as a teen-ager.

For some reason, I had the sort of face that asked to be punched. Something about the curve of my mouth, I guess. It made me look like I was being cute with people, smirking at them.

I am what is called a late-life child. My brother, Doke, is twenty years older and played semi-pro football. But by the time I came along Doke was through as a ballplayer, and my father had given up on seeing a son play pro. I was a month premature, and very, very tiny as a child. Dad named me Ignatius, after an uncle of his that I never knew. Of course I didn't take to sports, though I could run pretty fast (that comes with having a face people want to hit). I liked to read; I was the family bookworm. I'm four feet nine inches tall.

DOKE married young, divorced young, and had a son, Doke, Jr., that the wife took with her to Montana. But Doke missed the boy and went out there to be near him, and when I graduated from high school he invited me for a visit. That's how I ended up in Montana in 1971. I'd gone to spend the summer with Doke, in a hunter's cabin up in the mountains. It was a little cottage, with a big stone hearth and knotty-pine panelling and color photos of the surrounding country. On a shelf above the hearth were some basketball trophies belonging to the guy who owned the place, a former college all-star now working as an ophthalmologist down in Dutton.

Doke taught me how to fly-fish. A fly rod had a lot of importance to Doke, as if being good with the thing was a key to the meaning of life or something. He had an image of himself, standing in sunlight, all beauty, fly rod in hand. He was mystical about the enterprise, although he didn't really have much ability.

While I was staying with Doke, I met Hildie, my eventual ex-wife. She was a nurse in the hospital where Doke took me the night I met his new girlfriend, Samantha. I met Samantha about two hours before I met Hildie.

Samantha had come home to Montana from San Francisco, where she'd been with her crazy mother. Before I met her—for many days before—Doke had talked about her, about how beautiful and sexy she was. According to Doke, I just wasn't going to believe my eyes. He'd met her in a bar he used to frequent after working construction all day in Dutton. She was only twenty-five. He told me all about her, day after day. We were drinking pretty heavy in the evenings, and he'd tell me about what she had gone through in her life.

"She's so beautiful to have to go through that stuff," he said. "Suicide and insanity and abuse. A lot of abuse. She's part Indian. She's had hard times. Her father was a full-blooded Cherokee. She's a genius. He killed himself. Then her mother went crazy, and they put her in this institution for the insane, over in San Francisco. Her mother doesn't know her own name anymore. Or Samantha's. Pathetic, really. Think about it. And she looks like a goddess. I can't even find the words for it. Beautiful. Nobody in the world. Not even Hollywood."

At the time, I was worried about getting drafted into the Army and was under a lot of stress. I didn't want to hear about Doke's beautiful girlfriend. "Man," he said. "I wish I had her picture—a snapshot of her—so I could show you. But the Indian blood means she has this thing about having her picture taken. Like it steals part of her soul. They all believe that."

HE was talking about her the night she arrived, the travelling she'd done when she was a dancer for the Rolling Stones ("She knows Mick Jagger, man"), and the heavy things she'd seen—abused children and illicit drugs and alcohol—and also the positions she liked during sex, and the various ways they had of doing it together.

"She's an Indian," he said. "They have all kinds of weird ideas."

"Could we go out on the porch or something?" I said.

He hadn't heard me. "She wears a headband. It expresses her people. She was six when her mother went crazy the first time. A white woman, the mother, right? This poor girl from Connecticut had no idea what she was getting into, marrying this guy, coming out here to live, almost like a pioneer. Only, the guy turned out to be a wild man. They lived on the reservation, and nobody else wanted anything to do with them because of how he was. A true primitive, but a noble one, too. You should hear Samantha talk about him. He used to take her everywhere, and he had this crazy thing about rock concerts. Like they were from the old days of the tribe, see. He'd go and dance and get really drunk. Samantha went with him until she was in her teens. She actually has a daughter from when they travelled with the Rolling Stones. The daughter's staying with her mother's sister back East. It's a hell of a story."

"She's only twenty-five?"

He nodded. "Had the daughter when she was seventeen."

"The Rolling Stones," I said. "Something."

"Don't give me that look," he said.

I smiled as big as I could. "No," I said. "Really. I wasn't. I'd just like to go outside. It's stuffy in here, isn't it?"

"Could be Mick Jagger's kid," my brother said, significantly. "Samantha knew him."

"Well," I said. "Hey. She'll be here soon. We better clean up a little."

He poured himself another drink. "What have we done in our lives?" he said, staring at the table and looking sad. "I've worked a few jobs. Bought a car here and there. Got married and got divorced. And you—you graduated from high school. Went to the prom, right? I mean, we haven't really

FILIP PAGOWSKI

experienced anything. Imagine having your father kill himself."

"How'd he do it?" I asked.

"I told you," he said. "He shot himself. Jesus, are you listening to me?"

A little while later, Samantha pulled in, and we went out to greet her. She'd been driving for two days, she told us. It was almost dark, but from what I could see she looked like death itself. We all went inside, and Doke poured more whiskey. He kept watching me, waiting for a sign, I suppose. I couldn't give him one. He'd built up so many of my expectations that I'd begun to think beyond what was really possible for a big, not too nice-looking former high-school football star with a potbelly and a double chin. Samantha wasn't pretty. Not by a very, very, very long stretch. And it wasn't just the fact that she'd been sitting behind the wheel of a ratty carbon-monoxide-spewing car for two days. She could've just walked out of a beauty parlor after an all-afternoon session and it wouldn't have made any difference. She did have nice dark skin, but her eyes were set deep in her skull, and they were crossed a little. They were also extremely small—the smallest eyes I ever saw, like a rodent's eyes, black and with a scary glitter in them. They fixed on you as if you were something to eat and swallow. She was tall, and had long legs, and hips wider than Doke's. Her hair was shiny, crow black, and stiff. She'd let it grow wild, so it appeared that it hadn't seen a brush in her lifetime. She was not physically beautiful by any standard you care to name.

So there she was, and Doke stood by, staring, all moony-eyed and weepy with the booze and love, and I guess I couldn't keep the surprise out of my face. I had thought I was going to meet this beautiful woman; instead, I'd met Samantha.

"I have to go freshen up," she said after we'd been through the introductions. She went into the bathroom and closed the door. We heard what sounded like water being poured out of a big vat into other water.

Doke turned to me. "Well?" he said. "Right?"

"Jesus Christ," I said. I thought he meant the sound.

"Isn't she beautiful?"

I said, "Right." But I couldn't be as convincing as I wanted to be.

"You ever see anything—" he said. He was standing by the table, tottering a little, holding on to the back of the chair. "You know?"

I said, "Yeah."

He pulled the chair out and sat down, and ran his hands through his hair. "Just," he said. "Really."

I nodded.

"Right?" he said.

I said, "Uh-huh."

He picked up the bottle and drank. Then shook his head. "Something."

"Wow," I said.

After another drink and a few seconds of staring off, he said, "What's the matter with you?" He still wasn't looking at me.

I said, "Nothing. Why?"

He poured more whiskey, then sat there and seemed to study it. "You got something to say?"

"Can't think of anything," I said.

He looked at me, and I sat down, too. "Well?" he said. "I don't like that look."

"She's been on the road," I said. "She's tired."

"Not her. You. I don't like *your* look."

I ran my hands over my face. I thought he might think I was smirking at him. "Oh," I said. "I'm O.K."

"That isn't what I mean," he said.

I reached for the whiskey. "I think I'll have some more of that," I told him. "That all right with you?"

He didn't answer. He was thinking.

Samantha came out of the bathroom. I didn't know what she'd done to freshen up. Nothing had changed at all. She sat down and leaned back in the chair and clasped her hands behind her head. "So this is your brother."

"That's him," Doke said.

"You're so little compared to Doke. It's strange." She went over and got herself a glass, and brought it back to the table, where Doke poured her some whiskey.

"I told Ignatius about your dad and mom," Doke said to her.

She drank, then shook her head. "Terrible." She looked a lot older than twenty-five. She had earrings in her skin that went all the way up the side of her ear. This was the first time I'd ever seen that phenomenon. "I got a baby that's severely retarded. The oxygen wasn't right."

Doke seemed surprised. "You never said she was retarded."

"That's what I said."

She nodded, sadly. She was watching me. "My father took me to Altamont," she said. "I was there. I know Mick Jagger."

"It might be his kid," Doke said, all excited. "Right?"

She seemed to think this over. "No. I don't think so."

"But it could be, though. Right?"

She thought about the question. "No."

"Didn't you—" Doke said, then stopped. He was confused.

"We saw them. We were close, you know. But not that close."

Nobody said anything. I was watching Doke, because I couldn't look at Samantha—the difference between his description of her and the reality was too much. He said, "Well, I thought you said the kid was Jagger's kid."

"I suppose it could be. I had so many lovers back then."

"You mean you might not've noticed that it was Mick Jagger?" I said.

She stared at me. "Why'd he look at me like that?" she asked.

Doke took a drink. He was thinking.

I said something to smooth things over. "I have the kind of face that makes people think I'm being smart with them."

"He's always got that look," Doke said.

"Where is your kid?" I asked her.

She said, "With my mother's family, back East. My father was killed by the government for protesting against them."

"I thought your father killed himself," Doke said.

"He did." And she added, "The government drove him to it."

"Hell," I said.

She nodded importantly. "The government is not legitimate, you know. As long as there are whites living on Indian lands."

"Which Indian lands?" I said.

"The whole country."

"Oh, you mean—like the Constitution and all that. That's not valid."

"Right," she said.

"Not much chance of that going away," I said, meaning to sympathize with her.

"My father was a full-blooded Cherokee," she said. "Doke told you, I'm sure."

"I told him," Doke said. "I told him

about that and I told him about the Rolling Stones."

"It wasn't just the Rolling Stones. I travelled a lot. I had three hundred lovers before I was twenty-two."

Doke shook his head.

"Looking for love," I said.

She said, "At least three hundred of them."

"Lovers," I said.

She nodded.

"What was it that interested you about them? If you don't mind my asking."

She looked at me and her face twisted up, as if she smelled something bad. "What?"

"Are you making fun?" Doke asked. His face was a total blank.

"No," I said. I was truly curious. With that many lovers, it was hard to imagine that there wouldn't be some sort of filing system, to keep track of the types anyway. Doke was staring at me, so I put my hand over my mouth, which I had come to think of as the offending part of my face.

He shook his head again, then poured more whiskey. I sat back and pretended to be relaxed and interested, while Samantha talked about herself and her adventures. She was related to Crazy Horse, she said. And on her mother's side there was a distant connection to Mary Lincoln. She had lived in Haight-Ashbury and attended the University of California at Berkeley, majoring in law. She'd had plans to enter the system and ruin it from the inside. The collapse of the American government was the only hope for her and her people. But her father had this thing about rock concerts, and she'd got sidetracked. For years she'd followed the Grateful Dead around from concert to concert. She knew Jerry Garcia well. She'd had a child by him that died, and it was why she left to seek out the Rolling Stones. She liked their names better. Once, when she was only thirteen, she'd met John F. Kennedy. Doke sipped the whiskey, watching me. I was beginning to get sleepy. She droned on. She'd been a member of the Weathermen, and the F.B.I. had crushed them with bombs and fire and infiltrators. Doke was staring at me, waiting for the first sign that I wasn't utterly charmed, but I was actively fighting sleep. He had a big stake in her, and I didn't want to hurt his feelings. Samantha had fixed me with her rodent's eyes. But my eyes were so heavy. I rubbed them, put my hands over a yawn.

"I'm very sensitive to spiritual vibrations," she said. "It's my Indian blood."

This was in reference to something I must have missed in the long monologue, because Doke said, "So that's how you knew he was going to kill himself."

"Yes," she said. "But there wasn't anything I could do. It was his karma." She went on to talk about karma, and how a person's karma caused a glow that she could perceive. "I'm very perceptive," she said. "I can sense what a person is thinking. I get vibes from people."

I was thinking, *Please stop talking.*

"It's uncanny," she went on. "I look in a person's eyes, and I see all their thoughts, their innermost feelings."

Shut the fuck up, please, I was thinking. *Go to bed.*

She seemed never to take a breath. She said, "I learned this when I met Robert Kennedy at his house in McLean, Virginia. I was eighteen, and I think he was interested in me physically, too. It was so odd. I just walked up and knocked on his door and his maid—Eva was her name—"

"Well, I sure am beat," I said. I was desperate now. "Guess I'll turn in."

"I was telling you something," she said.

I said, "You must be awful tired."

"I was in the middle of telling something, and you started talking about turning in." She seemed to pout. I caught myself actually feeling sorry for her.

"We've been keeping you up," I said. "You must be exhausted." I stood, vaguely intending to make polite conversation as I left the room.

"She was telling you something," Doke said.

"Do you have an Indian name?" I asked Samantha.

She shook her head. "My mother insisted that I be given a white woman's name. She knew I would have a terrible time growing up in the white man's world."

I didn't say anything.

She added, "It would have split me in two. And you know how terrible it is to be split down the middle?" She reached over and played with the crown of Doke's hair.

I said I supposed I didn't. I yawned.

She said, "It's much worse than you can imagine. I'm sorry it bores you." She seemed proud to have plumbed my feelings.

"I'm fine," I said. "Just tired."

There didn't seem to be anything else to talk about. She sat. She was biting her nails, taking in the room with those little eyes. I had come to the realization that she was no more of Indian blood than I was the King of Spain. I had an image of her parents—a couple of Italians, probably, holding down an apartment in Brooklyn, wondering where the daughter ran off to. I said, "What's Mick Jagger like?"

"Very grungy and nervous." She was still biting her nails.

FICTION • BY SAMUEL BECKETT

THE CLIFF

WINDOW between sky and earth nowhere known. Opening on a colorless cliff. The crest escapes the eye wherever set. The base as well. Framed by two sections of sky forever white. Any hint in the sky at a land's end? The yonder ether? Of sea birds no trace. Or too pale to show. And then what proof of a face? None that the eye can find wherever set. It gives up and the bedlam head takes over. At long last first looms the shadow of a ledge. Patience it will be enlivened with mortal remains. A whole skull emerges in the end. One alone from amongst those such residua evince. Still attempting to sink back its coronal into the rock. The old stare half showing within the orbits. At times the cliff vanishes. Then off the eye flies to the whiteness verge upon verge. Or thence away from it all.

Written for the painter Bram Van Velde in 1975 and translated, from the French, by Edith Fournier.

I said, "Everything you've told us is a crock, right?"

"You can disbelieve me if you want," she said. "I don't care."

I looked at Doke. "Man," I said. Then I started out of the room. "Bedtime."

But Doke stood suddenly, and when I turned, he took me by the front of my shirt. "You think you can treat us like this?"

I said, "O.K., look. I'm sorry. I didn't mean anything."

"Leave him be," Samantha said. "It's his loss."

"Will you excuse us for a few seconds?" Doke said to her.

She got up and went outside. We could join her, she said, when we were through being babies. She closed the door and Doke walked me back against the wall, still holding my shirt in his fists.

"I saw the way you were looking at her."

"What difference does it make what I think?" I said. A mistake.

"Oh," he said. "What do you think?"

"Cut it out," I said. "Come on. Let me go."

"Not till you tell me what you think of Samantha."

"I think she's a liar," I told him. "And she's not even a very good one." I couldn't help myself. "And on top of that I think she's ugly as month-old pizza."

He commenced hitting me. He was swinging wildly, and some of his punches missed, which allowed me to get under the table. Then he started kicking. I was crawling around, trying to get away from him, and Samantha had come back in to stop him. When he stormed out into the dark, she got down on the floor and saw that I was bleeding from a gash on my forehead. I must have hit the edge of the table on my way under it. She was really quite gentle and sweet, getting me a rag for my head, and insisting that Doke would take me down to Dutton, to the emergency room.

As I said, it was while I was in the hospital that I met Hildie. "That's a nasty cut" was the first thing she said to me.

"Yes, ma'am," I said. I thought she was perfect. I wouldn't expect anyone else to think so, necessarily.

"How'd it happen?" she said.

"My brother and I got in a fight."

She shook her head, concentrating on her work, cutting a bandage to size for me. "Two grown boys like you."

"I could tell you about it," I said.

That was all it needed. My mother used to say, when the time is right you don't need to have a committee meeting about it.

When I eventually returned to the cabin, I found that Samantha had gone. She had picked up and headed off into the West, with a few of Doke's records and tapes and most of the money he'd saved. He took it pretty hard. For a while that summer, he had himself convinced that because she'd taken those things she was planning on coming back. But the months turned into the rest of the year, and I stayed on through the next spring and part of that summer, and she was just gone. His drinking got pretty bad, and I started having to look out for the boy a lot on the weekends.

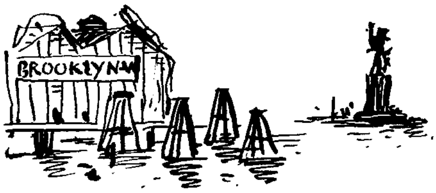
"It's not fair, I know it," Doke said to me. "I can't shake it, though."

"You've got to get ahold of yourself," I told him. I'd been seeing Hildie.

We were married at the end of that next summer, and for a while Doke's boy lived with us while Doke dried out, in rehab. The boy's mother was in some sort of rehab herself. Drugs. Sometimes, back then, it seemed to me that the whole country had gone crazy.

Hildie and I were together almost twenty years. We never had any children. Doke left Montana and lives in Seattle now. He's happy. Some stories do have happy endings, for a while, anyway. He's got a wife, and another boy, and a girl. He probably never thinks about Samantha. I used to imagine the Italian couple in Brooklyn, reunited with their wayward little girl, who pulled up one day, driving a car full of music and money. She was such a bad liar. Doke's son married a nice girl from Catalina, then moved to New York City. Everybody got along fine, really.

Hildie and I lived for a few years in a little three-bedroom rambler on Coronado Street in Sandusky, Illinois. Those first years, we had a lot of fun, usually. Now and then she'd lose her temper, and my old trouble would return: something about my face would cause her to start swinging at me. And I never hit back. But it doesn't, as the saying goes, take two to fight. One person with an urge to hit somebody else is enough. For the person getting knocked out, it might as well be the heavyweight championship.



One night, when we were drinking, I told Hildie about Samantha. I must have been a little careless in how I talked about Samantha's physical qualities, because I upset Hildie. These days, you say something about one woman and you've said it about all of them.

"Is that the way you see us?" she said.

"Us," I said. "What?"

"Is that how you judge women? You see that I'm gaining weight, don't you? And do you see me like this Samantha person?"

I said, "I'm just saying she wasn't what Doke said she was."

"It just kills me that that's how you think."

For about a year things had been going sour. Hildie had ballooned to about two hundred and fifty pounds. I had lost weight. And I was worried about money. So was she, but her worry came out differently. She kept asking me what I thought of her. "You think I'm ugly now," she'd say. "Right? That's how you see me. Why don't you come out and say it?"

"I think you're fine," I'd say.

"Tell me the truth. I'm too big."

"No," I'd say. "Really, hon."

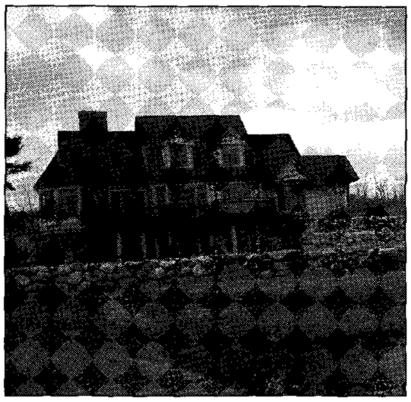
"You're lying. I can see it in your face."

My face again. There was nothing I could say. And, besides, I was about half her size by now.

Once I said, "Do *you* think you're too big?"

"It's not important what I think," she said. "Because, God damn it, I know how you think. All of you."

We needed extra income, and she hated the idea of nursing anymore, so she got a job serving food at a hospital cafeteria across the river in Missouri. There were nights when we didn't say a thing to each other, and after a few months she started doing things to get shut of me. That was O.K. I think I even understood. She made dates with the janitor on her floor, a man fifteen years older than I am and a lot bigger. She told people she was



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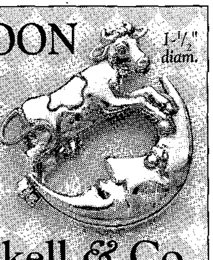

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leaving me. She had friends over at all hours of the day and night. When I walked in and someone asked who I was, she'd wave me away. "That's my soon-to-be ex," she'd say. It was always said like a joke, but you could feel the edge to it.

I never answered. I went about my business and tried not to get mad. She was as big as a Buick. She weighed more than my whole family put together, including Doke. I never mentioned that the bed sagged on her side, and that I was having to replace the mattress every six months. I'd watch her settle into her seat in a steak joint, order a porterhouse the size of an infant, and not say a word. I said nothing about her jeans, which were big enough to throw over a rhinoceros and keep it dry in the rain.

The night she kicked me out, she came home with a friend. A new lover, she told me. She made her lover wait out on the front lawn while she broke the news. "Do you understand me, Ignatius? I want you out. I've decided I don't need a man to tell me who I am. You can stay until you find a place. But sleep on the sofa. Grace is moving in with us."

Grace had walked into the hospital cafeteria several weeks before, after having been bandaged up in the emergency room. She'd been in a traffic accident, and her nose and upper lip were cut. Hildie and she got to talking, and pretty soon they were meeting for drinks after Hildie's shifts. It was just like Hildie and me, in a way, except that now she wanted a woman and not a man. I'd never thought much of myself, but this hurt me. "She's the most interesting person I've ever been around," Hildie said. "And you and I haven't been anything to each other for a long time." This was true. Grace walked up to the door, and Hildie opened it and stepped back for her to come in, acting like this was the grand entrance of her happiness. Grace had a big white bandage over her nose, but we weren't in the same room more than fifteen minutes before I recognized Samantha. Blond this time. A few pounds heavier, a little fuller in the face. But unmistakably her.

"Hello, Grace."

She looked at me with those little black eyes, and then sat on the couch next to Hildie. I went into the bedroom and started packing, throwing shirts in a suitcase, and some slacks and socks and underwear. I wasn't sure what I should take with me. I could hear Samantha/Grace in the next room. She had built her own house, she was saying, and had learned how to play several musical instruments but then forgot how. She had spent the night with Sting during a thunderstorm and power outage in Atlanta. By the time I was back to the living room, she was talking about Mt. St. Helens. She was there when it blew. She almost died.

"Ever been on the reservation?" I asked. I was putting a few of my books into my suitcase.

Both women looked at me as though I had trees growing out of my head.

"Reservation?" Samantha/Grace asked.

I couldn't tell if she recognized me. She stared, and then she smiled. So I smiled back, and resumed packing.

She said, "I've done so much wandering around. I've been in almost every state of the union, and made love in each one of them, too."

"I always wanted to go to Hawaii," Hildie said, laughing.

"Oh, absolutely. I've been there. I was married and lived there, but I got divorced."

"Must've been a tough week," I put in. It was a nasty thing to say. And it was the wrong time to say it. It made me look bad. I said, "Little joke, girls."

"Oh," Samantha/Grace said. "Haw."

Hildie shook her head. "Men."

"Haw, haw," Samantha/Grace said.

"Ever been to Montana?" I asked her.

"I worked in the emergency room at the hospital in Dutton," Hildie said. "A terrible, lonely job. That's where I had the misfortune of meeting Ignatius."

Samantha/Grace smiled and leaned back in her chair. My name is not one that a person forgets easily. She stared at me with her wolverine's eyes, and kept smiling.

Clasping her hands behind her blond head, Samantha/Grace said, "Well, you know, I never was in Montana. That's one of the few places I've never been."

I couldn't help it.

A laugh came up out of me like a sneeze. I laughed and laughed and went on laughing—so hard that Hildie got mad, and the madder she got the more I laughed. Before I had stopped laughing, she'd thrown all my things out on the lawn. This was the last night of my marriage, I knew that, and that was all right with me. I wouldn't want anyone to think I was complaining. ◆

What gives a woman style?

"I'M NOTHING TO LOOK AT," the Duchess of Windsor admitted. Rita de Acosta Lydig
no attention to w
Jacqueline Kenn
Onassis had none o
attributes of the i
American girl, and D
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money. Yet each of th
women had a personal m
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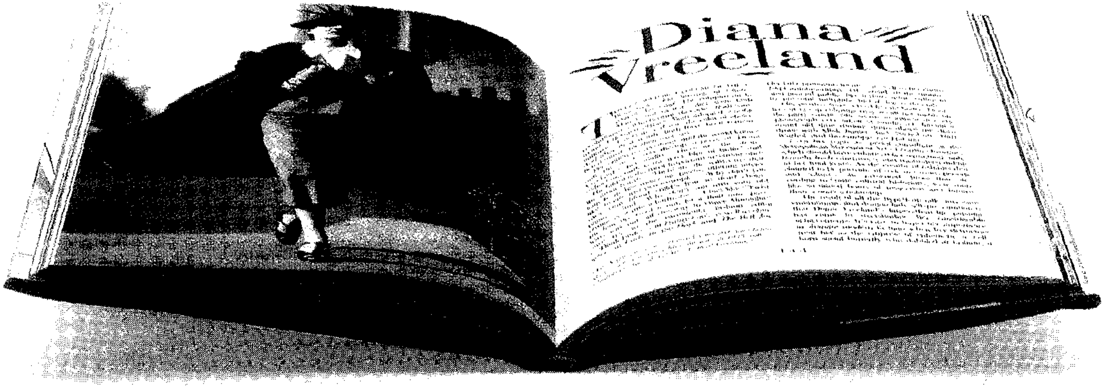
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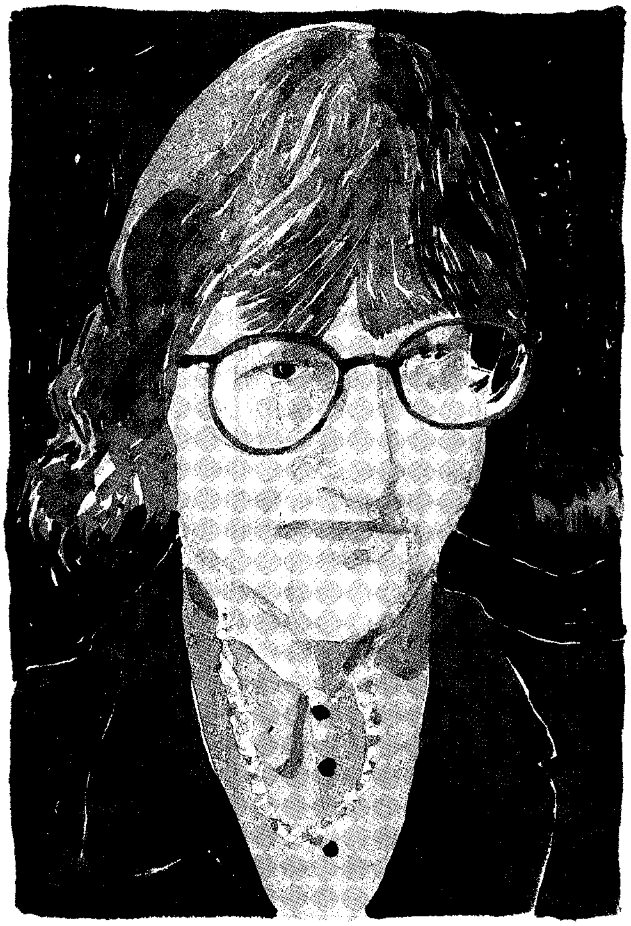
BOOKS

THE STORY OF OZICK

The making of a stylist.

BY JAMES WOOD

CYNTHIA OZICK writes out of a magical confinement. She works mostly at night, at the same Sears, Roebuck desk that she used as a teen-ager. She is now sixty-eight, and this has been the pattern for much of her life. She has described herself as "a kind of human snail, locked in and condemned by my own nature," and in her new book of essays, "Fame & Folly" (Knopf; $26), she mocks this "bloodless perfectionism and the secret crisis of confidence that dogs it." She is a writer who exists for the coaxing of sentences, and such a writer, she feels, is condemned to marginality, which is the stylist's hardship. For the lovely quibbling of the stylist does not thicken the world. The nightly pressing of words seems neurotic to her; each morning there is only an essential trickle.



Cynthia Ozick's subject is as large as aspiration itself.

But secrecy and invisibility have been Ozick's great subjects. In her celebrated story "Envy; or, Yiddish in America," Edelshtein, an untranslated Yiddish poet who lives in New York, gnashes at his neglect. He nurses a murderous envy of Ostrover, a world-famous and much translated Yiddish writer, modelled on Isaac Bashevis Singer. "Ostrover was free of the prison of Yiddish! Out, out—he had burst out, he was in the world of reality." Ozick's essays seek the loud absence in public life which is the stylist at work, obsessively writing. She scans writers' biographies for shadows. In "Justice (Again) to Edith Wharton," she strips Wharton's life of its orchestration and finds its singleness in Wharton's mornings, which were spent sitting upright in bed, writing. Impersonation is secrecy's ally: the writer may lead a public life that has little obvious connection to his work. In "Fame & Folly," Ozick notes how slippery were T. S. Eliot's various public selves, and how protected by his public diplomacy was his private, mental warfare. She writes of the Russian writer Isaac Babel, a Jew who rode with the Cossacks and meticulously recorded their anti-Semitic violence in a diary. In each case, she watches for the secret ampule of the writer's self, and hopes for its intactness. The writer may impersonate, deceive, ventriloquize in public life, but the writing self must not be bargained into pregnability.

That Ozick was not even invited to bargain until late in her life perhaps explains her obsessive vigilance. She has made her life into an anti-bildungsroman, and it has one of its most beautiful tellings in an essay from her new book called "Alfred Chester's Wig." Cynthia Ozick's parents were Russian-Jewish immigrants; she describes them as laboriously benign, distracted with work. Living "at the subway's lowest vertebra—the end of the Pelham Bay line," in the northeast Bronx, she grew up desperate to write. Three elocution instructors, Miss Trolander, Mrs. Davis, and Mrs. Papp, rubbed the Bronx stains off her accent. In her first year at New York University, in 1946, a depressed teacher of freshman composition pitted the young Ozick against her fellow-student Alfred Chester. They were both eager writers, in love with cadence and tangle. Chester, though he is largely unknown now, had early success: after college, he went off to Paris and published stories. Ozick had none. "Possessed . . . by the ravishments of other voices," she sat in her bedroom, sunk in an unfinishable novel entitled (after Blake) "Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love." And she read and read, especially Henry James.

HER twenties, and then most of her thirties, slipped by. The first novel she finished—a long one, entitled "Trust"—was not published until she was thirty-seven. She has misgivings about it now, and rightly so, for although it has power, it is too much of a wrestle for fine words. Not until her late thirties did she begin to construct the fierce hives of her compact stories and essays: "Envy" appeared in 1969, and her first book of essays, "Art & Ardor," in 1983. Many of her contemporaries—Updike, Mailer, Sontag, Roth, Brodkey—were early starters. They were anointed and abroad; Ozick was a tenant of the Sears, Roebuck desk. Magazines returned her stories; one day, she turned up at the offices of the *New York Review of Books*, but she was waved away. She admits that she has never recovered from such slights, and once wrote that "on their account [I] resent the white hairs of middle age with a spitefulness and absurdity appropriate only to the hungry young."

She sees her years of purdah as a grotesque waste. In "Fame & Folly," she explains: "My idea was to produce a long philosophical novel that would combine the attributes of André Gide, Henry James, George Eliot, Graham Greene, and Santayana's 'The Last Puritan'; it was an awkward and juvenile sort of thing, and kept me in the dark for years." She thought the choice was one between life and art, and chose art. She felt that this was Henry James's message to her. Only later did she realize that James himself had a youth, and that he spent it rather than hoarded it: as a young man, James wrote essays, went to dinners, and enjoyed ambassadorial stopovers in town. And James sounded like James. Ozick had to sound like Ozick, not like James. "The great voices of Art never mean *only* Art; they also mean Life, they always mean Life," she came to believe, and also that "to be any sort of competent writer one must keep one's psychological distance from the supreme artists."

The writer's life, like any life, is a dream of concurrence: backdated eminence is missed eminence. Ozick is hardly the first writer to regret her early debts, and hardly the first to find her late refunds pallid, even though to others they seem rich—in her case, beautiful novels like "The Cannibal Galaxy" and "The Messiah of Stockholm," several collections of stories, numerous awards, and even a recent anthology entitled "A Cynthia Ozick Reader," edited by Elaine M. Kauvar (Indiana; $39.95/$17.95), which announces, cabalistically, "Cynthia Ozick is on anybody's list of the ten most important writers in North America today." These are busy times for her. A play, directed by Sidney Lumet, will open next month. Her new book is her third volume of essays in fourteen years. And she has recently completed a new novel.

Even if all this does not bring enough consolation, Ozick's delicate sense of

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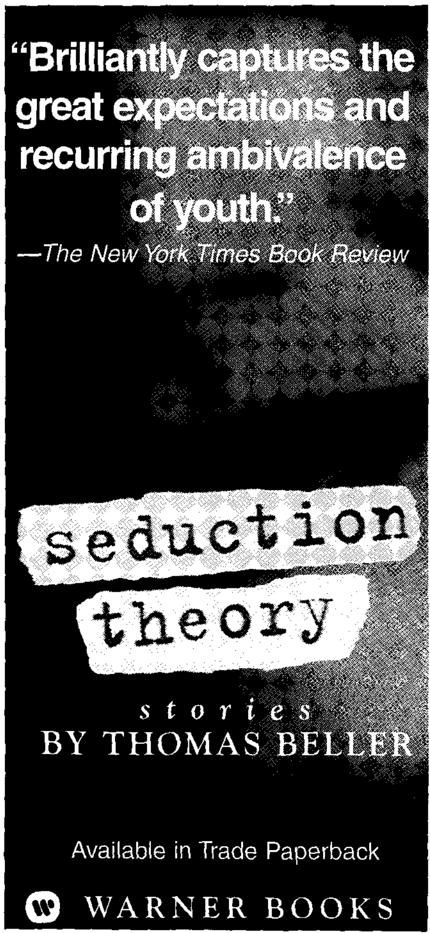

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reward and failure is a great advantage to her as a critic. In this new collection of essays, she watches over her subjects with an almost maternal vicariousness, grieving over their setbacks and waiting for them to take the main chance. Her cynical understanding of how "importance" is secured makes her alert not only to a writer's secrecies but to a public impersonator's crudities. Writing is a competition as well as a vocation, and involves a certain amount of literary hustling. Eliot had to cook up modernism in London, then invite his guests; it was not brought to him on a plate. Ozick knows this, and she shows how Ezra Pound's protégé graduated and then cast off his instructor: "Gradually, over a span of years, there was a reversal of authority and power. Eliot rose and Pound sank. . . . In the alien precincts of London, where his credentials were unknown or immaterial, the top could not be so easily guaranteed; it would have to be cajoled, manipulated, seduced, dared, commanded, now and then dodged; it would have to be pressed hard, and cunningly. . . . He was actually better at it than Pound, because infinitely silkier." Who but Ozick, while discussing Virginia Woolf's criticisms of "Ulysses" (Woolf called it "striking and ultimately nauseating"), would see instead of Woolf's snobbery the ticking of her envy: "But she knew Joyce to be moving in the same direction as herself; it was a race that, despite her certainty of his faults, he might win. By the time of her death she must have understood that he *had* won."

At times there is a parental cruelty. She punishes writers with her self-knowledge, and delivers final judgments joyfully. "James was a genius, Wharton not," she states in her essay on Wharton. She sees the smallness of Alfred Chester's talent: he had early success but faded into oblivion and died miserably, alone in Jerusalem, with two unruly dogs for his companions. Chester was a minor writer, and Ozick cannot help reminding us of this. She evicts him from the mansion and puts him in the gatehouse, murmuring caste verities as she goes: "The economy of writing always operates according to a feudal logic: the aristocracy blots out all the rest. There is no, so to speak, middle class. The heights belong, at most, to four or five writers, a princely crew; the remainder are invisible, or else have the partial, now-and-then visibility that attaches to minor status." Chester's problem was that he was too saturated with other writers. Ozick's essay on Chester might be seen as a splinter of Saul Bellow's novel "Humboldt's Gift," which is the central narrative of an American writer's decline. For Chester, "literature was a costume . . . he hardly ever went naked." Bellow goes further, writing of Humboldt that he "wanted to drape the world in radiance, but he didn't have enough material."

THE literary career has always been an alluring subject for American writers. Henry James noted the incongruity of "the exaggerated homage rendered to authorship" in élite circles, in light of "the large conditions of American life" (the vastness of general American neglect). Melville fretted similarly in "Pierre," and in his "Dream Songs" Berryman groaned immaculately at "god who has wrecked this generation"—his generation of writers. Ozick is flushed with this history of self-interest. But she is closer to a European model—to those lyric poets whose self-exhortations eventually become their poems. To some extent, the aspiration to do great work has turned into the very subject of her work, as it has for others. Much of Rilke's writing is self-prodding in the same way; it is as if he knotted his tie at the end of the day as a reminder to himself to write more the next. "Let it be said, in my honor, that I wrote a great deal in those days," Rilke's surrogate and hero recalls in the novel "The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge." "I wrote with compulsive fervor. . . . I wrote; I had *my* life, and the one next door was a completely different life." The secret stylist, with her fervor to write, writes about the fervor.

And since the desire to be a great writer is the desire to swim into the essence of oneself, to speak amply with one's secret voice, Ozick's subject is clearly not small but, rather, as large as aspiration itself. Ozick's fictional characters want "greatness" not just in publishers' neighborhoods but in the vicinity of the soul. "Success," "winning,"

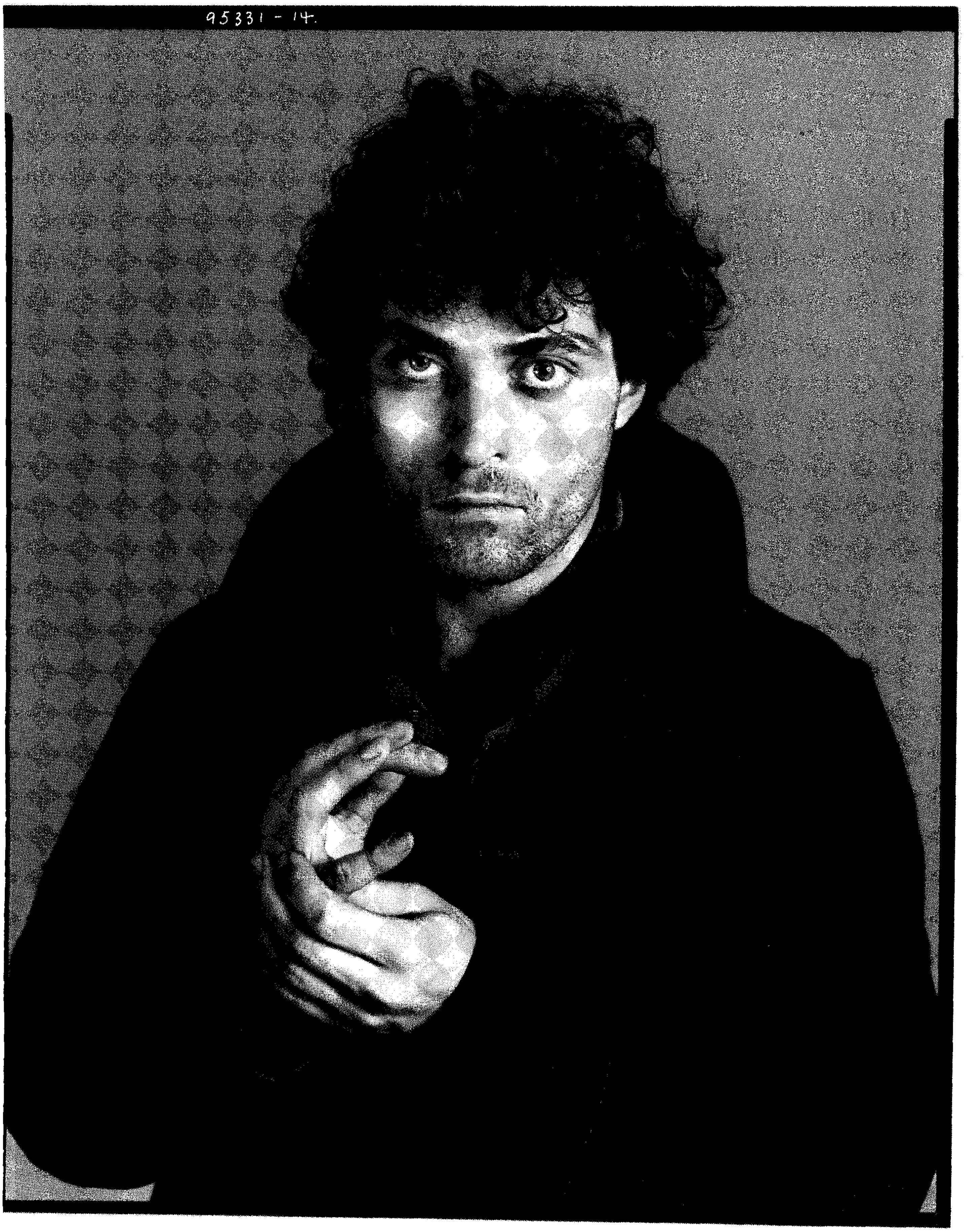
SHOWCASE
BY RICHARD AVEDON

ROLES FOR RUFUS

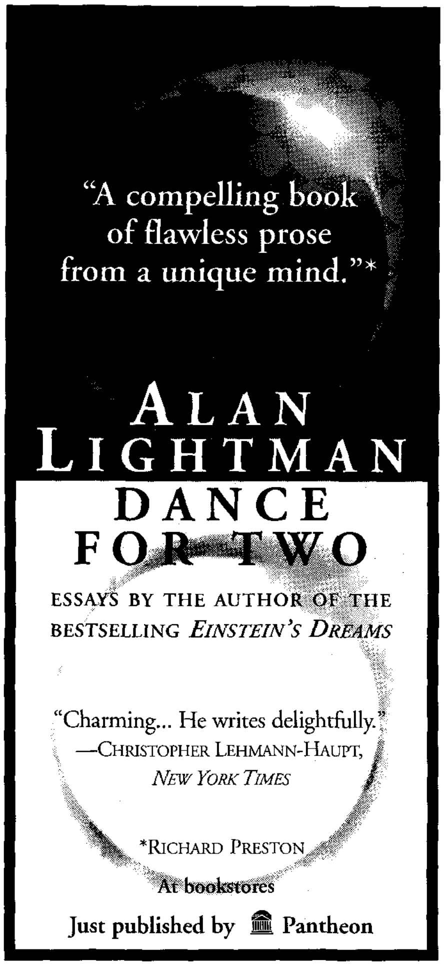
EVER since his performance as the young tutor Septimus in Tom Stoppard's "Arcadia" three years ago, Rufus Sewell has received numerous offers from movie directors, but no blandishment has been as honeyed as the one brought backstage last fall at London's Duke of York's Theatre, where Sewell was appearing in "Rat in the Skull." The wooer was Kenneth Branagh, who was casting his all-star movie version of "Hamlet." Sewell recounts the scene: " 'I'll cover you in gold,' Ken said, 'and make you look like a god. I'll give you a day with Gielgud, and you'll share a trailer with Jack Lemmon.' " Sewell accepted, and shot his scenes on a break from a much more arduous assignment, as Giles in a lavish film adaptation of Hardy's "The Woodlanders." It's a role whose randiness conforms more readily to the actor's image. "I love this idea that I'm confronted by legions of women when I walk down the streets," Sewell says. "The truth is that I get recognized by actors, or by people who have sex with actors. And I'm recognized most often by old ladies who've seen my costume dramas on television."

Sewell won't shed period drag soon. He's in Italy at the moment, starring in Marshall Herskovitz's "The Honest Courtesan," an unusual love story set in the sixteenth century. "I suppose it could be called ' "Thirtysomething" Goes to Venice,' although no one says anything daft like 'Don't patronize me for being human,' " Sewell jokes. The actor's cheekiness masks his equivalent dramatic skills. In an upcoming movie version of Conrad's "Victory," he plays a killer. "My character is colonial crazy and weirdly contemporary," Sewell says. "He's not gay, but he loves the company of gay men." In John Schlesinger's English-village tale "Cold Comfort Farm," which opens this week, Sewell's passion is again more overt: he plucks the virtue from local beauties. The actor sees the part less glamorously. "I could pout as much as I wanted," he says.

—BRENDAN LEMON



Rufus Sewell, London, November 25, 1995.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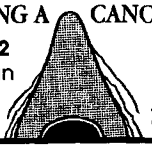


"fame"—these are Ozick's local obsessions. But the race is always spiritual as well as local. Edelshtein, in "Envy," is trapped by literary neglect but trapped, too, by his own unhealth and rancor. Lars Andemening, in "The Messiah of Stockholm," is a Stockholm literary critic who believes that his father was the great Polish writer Bruno Schulz, who was murdered by the Nazis in 1942. Lars and his friends stumble across what they believe to be Schulz's posthumous novel, which is called "The Messiah." They have found the Messiah: Ozick's play on words radiates beyond easy comedy, because, for her characters, literature is the Redeemer. Above Ozick's desk for many years was pinned the title of Kierkegaard's essay "Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing." Kierkegaard's "one thing" was what he called the Good, or the Eternal. Ozick's one thing is the Literary Eternal.

She herself is caught on a metaphysical gradient. Ozick is the most religiously inclined of contemporary American writers; she is torn between what she sees as the aesthetic and the moral, or the Hellenic and the Hebraic. In her essay "Toward a New Yiddish" (1970), which appeared in "Art & Ardor," she attacked the *nouveau roman* and its then American incarnation in the work of writers like William Gass. This, she felt, was literature turned into an "idol," which is to say, a self-referential aesthetic sacrament, with neither a substantial nor a moral relation to the world. Jewish writers, she argued, need instead an art of "liturgy," a moral art turned toward reality. This being in the world and simultaneously judging its worldliness she finds essentially Jewish. Famously, she has suggested that literature must have "a certain corona of moral purpose," and has said, "Fiction will not be interesting or lasting unless it is again conceived in the art of the didactic. (Emphasis, however, on *art*.)" She finds models in the moral attentiveness of Tolstoy and George Eliot ("The novel at its nineteenth-century pinnacle was a Judaized novel") and in the literature of midrash, or parable. Her own stories are often fablelike and have an educative motion.

Perhaps she limits herself here. Idolatry is a religion, too, though Ozick does not care for it, and the only correction to an idolatrous literature is not necessarily a religious one. If a more engaged, or even more moral, literature is demanded, then perhaps it should be called just that. For it is not clear that specifically Jewish, or "liturgical," writing is freed from the dangers of idolatry. Does liturgy always turn itself outward to the world? Is liturgy never its own ceremony? In other words, a novel is nourished by many sources, and a religious language, however versatile, seems too unitary a vocabulary for such greediness. Fiction is always a family of realities and transcendences, with both sides talking too much.

But Ozick surely knows this. Her fiction is at least as secular as it is liturgical; it is in the world in the way that her characters would like to be in the world. Ozick fears that she may have missed greatness because she is not abundant, and because she has been so diverted by essay writing. Essays are lesser, she thinks, because they summarize. "They do not invent." But this is not so. Her essays invent language, for one thing, and this language—busy, rhapsodic, willful—is congruous with the language of her fiction. In her earlier work, some of her sentences had a disruptive glamour, pulling the attention away from more ordinary sentences, and stalling the flow of a paragraph or a page. This felt in several senses like envious prose. But her mature work seems a poetry of ecstasy that happens to have been written by a prose writer.

Like Alfred Chester, she has absorbed many writers, but her writing is radiantly her own. From Dickens and Bellow she learned how to turn her people into things and her things into people: her subjects have a locked vitality. Chester she describes as "short and ovoid, with short active fingers like working pencil erasers." (Ozick feeds her sentences with repetitions.) Truman Capote she turns into a "tiny-fingered flaccid man, with molasses eyes and eunuch's voice, looking like an old caricature of Aeolus, the puff-cheeked little god of wind." Her specificity is furious while managing to remain metaphorical, with the result that her world becomes somewhat like a fairy tale. Capote becomes magical, with his tongue lolling on his lip "like a soft fly." Her people are real, but they frolic in a secret garden. Her character Lars Andemening is seen thus: "He let out a sigh no wider than a filament." And Isaac Babel like this: "Babel is small, his glasses are small and round, he sets down secret sentences." And at times they have an almost angelic glow. In this description of Lars writing a review, her prose beats its wings and flies:

> When he woke at seven into full blackness of night, he felt oddly fat—he was sated with his idea, he understood what he thought. He sat down immediately to his review. He wrote it straight off, a furnace burning fat. It was as if his pen, sputtering along the line of rapid letters it ignited, flung out haloes of hot grease. The air brightened, then charred. He was very quick now, he was encyclopedic, he was in a crisis of inundation. He drove through all the caged hypotheses of his author—some were overt and paced behind bars, others were camouflaged, dappled; he was a dervish, he penetrated everything. When he was within sight of conquest he began to fuzz over with vertigo; he was a little frightened of all he knew.

Meanwhile, her objects stream with life: the I. M. Pei pyramid at the Louvre, for instance, with its "triplet of smaller pyramids like three echoing laughters," or a tree, in her story "The Pagan Rabbi," that is pictured as "a delicate young oak, with burly roots like the toes of a gryphon exposed in the wet ground."

A writer with this much animation is unlikely to let her writing become an idol of self-reference. But a writer of this carefulness will always be tempted toward aestheticism. Fifty years ago, she turned literature into an idol when she shut herself in her bedroom and worshipped a figment of Henry James. And though she mourns those lost years, she knows that only if you once worshipped literature as an idol can you fall out of worship into sterner devotion. Only by turning literature into an idol can you conquer it as an idol. So, even now, her disappointments freshen her. For what is lost may have ceased to exist for her; perhaps this is why Ozick now feels that she is without a past. It is as if she were just beginning. She is twenty again, and famished. ♦

THE WOE THAT IS IN MARRIAGE

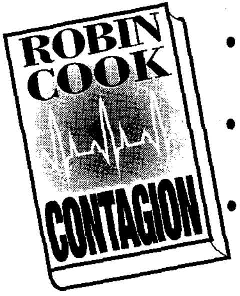
A surprising chapter in a poetic odyssey.

BY VIJAY SESHADRI

Louise Glück

EVEN before Louise Glück's new volume, "Meadowlands" (Ecco; $22), was published, admirers could be heard describing it, somewhat incongruously, as a "funny" book, with the implication that this represented a significant aesthetic departure. There was something faintly comic in itself about this advance word, which had to do with the inexpert way that people try to generate excitement about a book of poetry. It's a fact that our most accomplished poets can be at least as entertaining as a good "Seinfeld" episode, yet when poetry lovers say as much their claims are often greeted with skepticism. And for readers who are addicted to Glück's ironic inflections, her stern disenchantments, and her capacity to locate the hiding places of a massive, stationary reality, this talk was unsettling for another reason as well. Did we really want a funny Louise Glück? Readers of poetry tend to crave more of the same: they don't like to be excessively surprised by poets whom they've appropriated to their own experience.

"Meadowlands" *is* surprising and in places very funny (when Glück read from it to a packed house in New York re-



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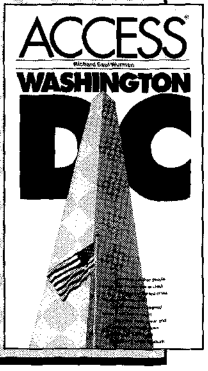

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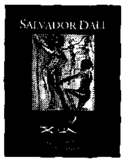

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cently, she got lots of laughs), but it's more accurately characterized as an arrival than as a departure. For more than a decade, Glück has been writing books of poems that are meant to be encountered like novels, and has been looking into the difficult problem of finding a structure whereby an essentially lyric gift can be adapted to epic and unifying ambitions. "Meadowlands" gives us her most elaborate and satisfying solution. If her previous book, "The Wild Iris," was said to resemble a song cycle, this one can be said to resemble a complete cantata, with dramatis personae, recitatives, arias, and instrumental passages. The elements that we have come to associate with her writing—the terse lines over which a diaphanous rhetoric has been carefully laid, the abrupt shifts from romance to hardheadedness and back, the dramatic vocalizations, the flexible use of Greek and Biblical myths—have found a home in a large, baroque edifice.

Much that is authentically new has also been housed here. The vibrant schema of the book, which, in ambiguous counterpoint, employs characters and incidents from the Odyssey—a poem of arrivals and reconciliations—to tell the story of a dissolving marriage, accommodates all sorts of fresh feelings and tensions, ranging from the scabrous, such as "I said you could snuggle. That doesn't mean/your cold feet all over my dick," to the naïvely insistent, as in

> If you can hear the music
> you can imagine the party.
> I have it all planned: first
> violent love, then
> sweetness

and the mutely resigned:

> Does it matter where the birds go? Does
>   it even matter
> what species they are?
> They leave here, that's the point,
> first their bodies, then their sad cries.
> And from that moment, cease to exist
>   for us.

This schema accommodates a chorus of actual persons, too, from the great dead (Maria Callas, Otis Redding) to next-door neighbors (the Lights, who entertain themselves by playing klezmer music) and figures from current events (Lawrence Taylor and Phil Simms, formerly of the New York Giants). Up to now, Glück volumes have been sparsely populated. "Meadowlands," by comparison, is a metropolis.

Although Glück is still in the middle of her career, it's clear that she is one of those poets—like Yeats, for example, and unlike Stevens—whose writing is provoked by their unfolding temporal life. Consequently, her work falls naturally into discernible stages. She began by writing what used to be called "deep image" poetry, a variant of the confessional mid-century American lyric in which the otherwise static surface of the poem was enlivened by an infusion of energy from the subconscious:

> As though a voice were saying
> *You should be asleep by now*—
> But there was no one. Nor
> had the air darkened,
> though the moon was there,
> already filled in with marble.

This Celtic-twilight period ended with her third volume, "Descending Figure" (1980)—a perfect book of poetry, but one whose very perfection seemed to exhaust its inherent possibilities. In her next book, "The Triumph of Achilles" (1985), Glück turned away from this earlier work with a vengeance:

> It is not the moon, I tell you.
> It is these flowers
> lighting the yard.
>
> I hate them.
> I hate them as I hate sex,
> the man's mouth
> sealing my mouth, the man's
> paralyzing body—

The oblique way of working which she had mastered was now brought to bear on sexual and familial politics and on the sensation, always excruciating in this poet, of consciousness trapped in nature. The poems were at once more intimate than confessions and more objective than allegories. They looked slender but were nevertheless monumental; they had sharp edges, and they gleamed with asperity and carefully modulated anger.

Glück hasn't abandoned the edges and the anger in "Meadowlands," and obliqueness still characterizes her method of operation, though at an angle of incidence considerably less steep. What distinguishes "Meadowlands" from her previous work is the earthiness that she displays and the newfound willingness to let her readers enter the honey-combed quotidian life out of which her poetry is written. This is a brave gesture on her part, and it reflects a supremely rewarded poetic self-confidence. ♦

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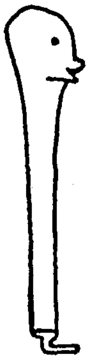
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BRIEFLY NOTED

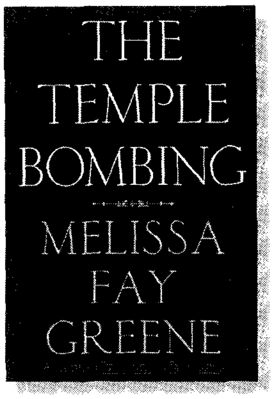
In the Presence of the Enemy, by Elizabeth George (Bantam; $23.95). In George's superb Inspector Lynley novels, every action—or non-action—has consequences, so by the time there is someone nasty to blame there is still plenty of blame left over to spread around. Here the author takes a basic tenet of police work—the best place to hide something is in plain sight—and flips it: a scandalmonger, for instance, discovers that the important thing is not what happened but what didn't. This book, the eighth in the series, is a grim dazzler.

The Good Society: The Humane Agenda, by John Kenneth Galbraith (Houghton Mifflin; $21.95). In a good society, Galbraith writes, "every member, regardless of gender, race or ethnic origin, should have access to a rewarding life." He then examines the economic choices and political policies that would enable this country to fulfill that noble ethical ideal. His style is characteristically crisp as he demolishes the jerry-built constructs of myth and prejudice about governments and markets which pass for the ideologies of left and right. The solutions he proposes are common sense raised to the level of genius.

Here's the Deal: The Buying and Selling of a Great American City, by Ross Miller (Knopf; $27.50). Miller traces the history of a single block in downtown Chicago to epitomize the failure of the combined glass-box high-rise and open-plaza style of urban redevelopment. In this egregious case, three acres of architectural and economic diversity were bulldozed *after* the market for office space was glutted; they now stand vacant. Miller's irreverent and entertaining real-estate saga reinforces a lesson that has been learned in many places: monumental urban projects frequently destroy city life.

Edouard Manet, by Beth Archer Brombert (Little, Brown; $29.95). Perhaps the last audible word spoken by Charles Baudelaire was the name of his friend Manet—consummate Parisian and consummate painter. But what was esteemed by Baudelaire was deplored by the public and the Salon again and again. "Every year," said a critic about Manet's exclusion from yet another official exhibition, "there is a Manet problem, just as there is an Orient problem or an Alsace-Lorraine problem." To recount Manet's life, as Brombert has done in this elegant biography, is to tell the story of an enormously influential artist struggling to paint what he called "the spirit of contemporaneity" while remaining committed to the conservative institutions of civil life—the very same institutions that shunned him.

Heaven's Coast, by Mark Doty (HarperCollins; $24). A singular memoir about a twelve-year relationship that ended when the poet Mark Doty's partner, Wally Roberts, died of AIDS. The coast of the title is Provincetown, to whose austere, apparitional beauty Doty testifies in clear, eschatological prose. But it's also that continuously changing line in the sand where the heart and the beloved meet—both in the here and now and in a deeply imagined afterlife.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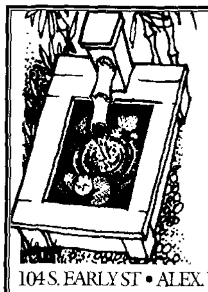
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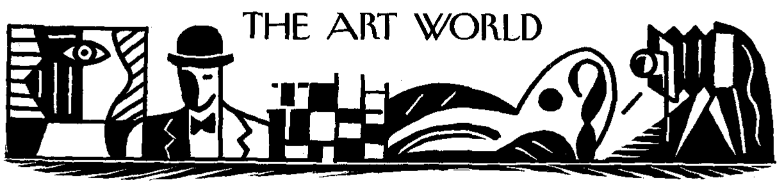


PICASSO'S TRUE LIES

A new key to the artist emerges in MOMA*'s big show.*

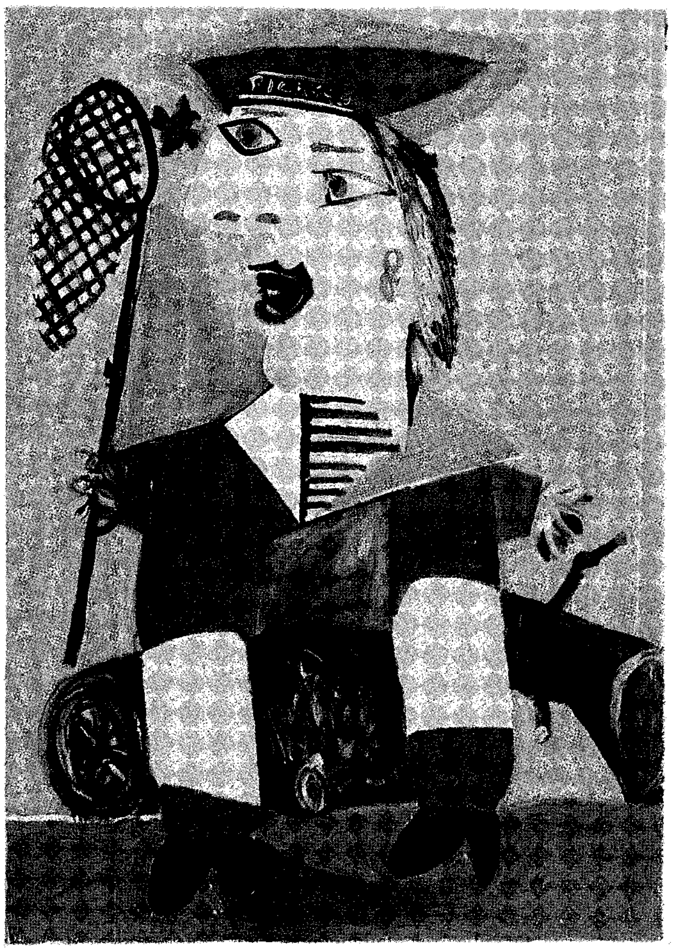
BY CALVIN TOMKINS

THE "Picasso and Portraiture" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (through September 17th) is an astonishing event. You may have thought that the Picasso cordillera was pretty well explored and mapped by this time, but it appears that not a single exhibition, book, or major scholarly paper had ever undertaken a broad overview of Picasso as a portrait artist. This oversight has been rectified by William Rubin, the director emeritus of MOMA's Department of Painting and Sculpture, in a show that will almost certainly change the way we think about Picasso, about portraits, and about the mysterious interaction of art and life.

Something like a fifth of Picasso's total œuvre can be described as portraiture, in the large and rather elastic sense that Rubin assigns to the term here. A few scholars will undoubtedly feel that he is stretching the definition too far. The exhibition's main purpose, however, is to show how Picasso changed the whole concept of portraiture, transforming it, as Rubin writes in the exhibition catalogue, "from a purportedly objective document into a frankly subjective one." Rembrandt, El Greco, van Gogh, and other great artists had used portraits as vehicles for their subjective feelings, to be sure, but without shirking the ancient duty to more or less accurate pictorial *likeness.* Picasso went all the way, jettisoning likeness and turning the portrait into a record of his personal responses to the subject. The results could be disturbing and sometimes incomprehensible, as in his 1937 "Portrait of Paul Éluard": the Surrealist poet is depicted here as a grinning, green-skinned transsexual in a straw hat, suckling a striped cat at one ludicrous breast. Whatever Picasso "meant" by that particular transformation may never be known, but the image, like so many others in this exhibition of monstrous or ravishing metamorphoses, is not soon forgotten.

The portraits of his family, his friends, and his own juggernaut persona that abound in Picasso's early work do not break the mold of nineteenth-century portraiture. During the summer of 1906, however, a radical shift takes place in Picasso's art. After laboring through the winter and spring on a portrait of Gertrude Stein (more than ninety sittings), he paints out her face and abandons the canvas, unfinished. A few days later, he leaves for Spain with Fernande Olivier, his Parisian mistress, to spend the summer in the tiny village of Gosol, in the Pyrenees. Among the dozens of drawings, paintings, and other works that Picasso produces in this idyllic spot are several portrait studies of Josep Fontdevila, the innkeeper, whom Fernande describes as "a fearsome old man of a strange and savage beauty." Something very deep passes between the young artist and this formidable patriarch. One sketch shows Fontdevila nude, arms crossed on his powerful chest. In another, his high-cheekboned features are those of a much younger man. Still another drawing has the startlingly simplified, pared-down look of a death mask, and something of that same look appears in the oil-on-canvas portrait that Picasso does of him.

A masklike, "primitivist" quality makes its appearance in the drawings and paintings that Picasso does of Fernande during the summer in Gosol. According to Rubin, its source is not only Fontdevila but also Picasso's memories of strange, semi-abstract faces on some ancient Iberian stone sculptures that he had seen in the Louvre that spring. On returning to Paris, Picasso completes the portrait of Gertrude Stein without asking her to sit for him again. She, too, receives a masklike, hieratic face, which strikes many of Stein's friends as a poor likeness, but which Stein herself later refers to as "the only reproduction of me which is always I." Picasso has made the crucial transition from a perceptual to a conceptual art—the transition that will lead straight to "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon"—and he has done so largely through portraiture.



"Maya in a Sailor Suit" (1938). Picasso went all the way, turning the portrait into a record of his personal responses.

FROM this point on, the vast majority of what Rubin calls Picasso's "autobiographical portraits" will focus on the women in his life. It has been the custom to associate Picasso's various styles and periods with the reigning mistress in each case—Fernande Olivier with Cubism; Olga Khokhlova, his first wife, with neoclassicism; Marie-Thérèse Walter with Surrealism; Dora Maar with Expressionism—but in this exhibition, which is dominated by images of women whom he painted again and again, it becomes clearer than ever that such nearsighted packaging will never do. Neoclassical imagery, for example, appears first in a painting called "The Artist and His Model," which Picasso did in 1914, three years before he met Olga; the Ingres-like nude model is Eva Gouel, who was also the subject of his virtually abstract 1912 Cubist masterpiece "J'Aime Eva." Picasso painted each of his lovers in whatever style he happened to favor that day; he never really "retired" any of his styles after Cubism. You sometimes feel that pictorial concerns take precedence over his emotional reactions to the subject, in fact, and if that is the case—if the subject is simply a motif to be manipulated—does it really matter who she is? Well, yes, it matters quite a lot, because Picasso, the most autobiographical artist of all time, rarely did anything that was not contaminated by life—his own life and the lives of those around him. To concentrate exclusively on pictorial issues is to miss half the feast.

When Rubin was gathering the material for his exhibition, he made a surprising discovery. The classically beautiful woman with delicate features and long, cascading hair whose image appears frequently in Picasso's work during the years 1922 and 1923, and who had been thought to represent either Olga Khokhlova or some generic, ideal woman, was in fact, Rubin decided, Picasso's American friend Sara Murphy. Sara and Gerald Murphy had moved from New York to Paris in 1921, with their three young children. Although by no means wealthy people, they had enough money to live independently there, as a result of the favorable exchange rate, and their imaginative and appealing personalities soon brought them into close contact with many of the writers, artists, and musicians of the period. (Gerald Murphy himself was in the process of becoming a painter—one whose truncated but highly original body of work is seen today as a precursor of Pop Art.) During the summer of 1923, the Murphys persuaded the owner of the Hôtel du Cap in Antibes to remain open during the summer (nobody used to go to the Riviera in the summer then), and they persuaded Pablo and Olga Picasso, whom they knew and liked, to stay there, too. Many of the works in question date from this period; according to Rubin's count, there are more than two hundred drawings of Sara by Picasso, and nearly forty paintings, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art's "Woman in White." The notion that Picasso may have had an affair with Sara Murphy that summer—something that Rubin proposed in a 1994 article in *ARTnews*—sounds wrong to anyone who knew Sara. None of the Murphys' many friends ever noticed or suspected any such thing, and neither did Olga, who was fiercely jealous. But it is easy to believe that Picasso became infatuated with Sara, and the visual evidence is convincing. (For example, a string of pearls is worn by the woman in several of the drawings; Sara often wore her pearls to the beach, because she thought it was good for them to get the sun.) Although Sara does not really look like herself in the pictures, she is certainly the way Picasso imagined her: serenely maternal in a way that nervous Olga could never be; a lovely and benevolent goddess.

Marie-Thérèse Walter, the teen-ager who is now thought to have entered Picasso's life as early as 1925, may have reminded him of Sara. Her pale Scandinavian beauty was unmarked by life, however, and the sensuality with which Picasso re-created her is like some ultimate form of possession. Three paintings, all done in January, 1932, show the range of her transformation. In "The Dream," which may well be the most erotically beautiful image in Picasso's entire œuvre, she is asleep in a red armchair, her oval head cushioned on her bare shoulder; one breast is partly exposed, and a red-and-yellow necklace (a memory of Sara?) follows the soft, rounded contours of her lilac-colored flesh. Two days earlier, he had painted her as a scary apparition, with violently displaced body parts and clenched teeth ("Repose"), and before the week was out he would turn her into an assemblage of massive, bonelike fragments ("Woman in a Red Armchair"). She is an allegory of conscious and subconscious womanhood in MOMA's famous "Girl Before a Mirror"; a burgeoning, fruitlike form in "Nude Asleep in a Landscape"; a pneumatic, monstrous-headed giantess in "Bather with Beach Ball." In the most amazing metamorphosis of all, Marie-Thérèse's voluptuous, compliant body is unmistak-

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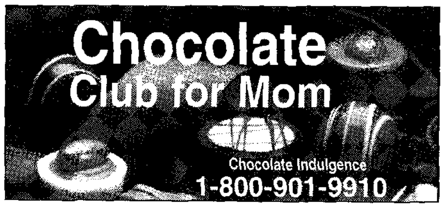

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ably evoked by a large-handled pitcher, a *compotier*, and a bowl of fruit in the 1931 "Still Life on a Pedestal Table"; Picasso once pointed out the relevant components to his friend Pierre Daix. Aside from the fact that she bore him a daughter, Maya, and that she hanged herself in 1977, we know very little about Marie-Thérèse Walter. Her fate was near-total sublimation into art.

SINCE Picasso was an artist who could not keep himself out of the picture, it seems odd that there are not more out-and-out self-portraits. In his early years, he did quite a few—drawings and caricatures, and also bravura compositions such as the 1901 "Yo, Picasso," a supercharged image of the young shaman with magical powers, and the great 1907 "Self-Portrait," whose flat, angled planes anticipate Cubism. After 1907, however, his own image is rarely the subject of a picture. Picasso is *there*, needless to say, in his endlessly inventive reactions to the nominal subject, and, not infrequently, as a sort of surrogate figure who interacts with that subject: the bearded, laurel-wreathed sculptor with his nude model; the handsome faun pulling aside a curtain to gaze on the sleeping nymph; the Minotaur, a terrifying bull-god who permits himself, in Picasso's most famous etching, to be led by a little girl; the Rembrandtesque musketeers and the wrinkled dwarfs who populate the late paintings. But then, in the final year of his life, he stared unflinchingly at the image that looked back at him from the mirror, and put down what he saw. Picasso's lifelong terror of disease and death did not keep him, in the end, from confronting these enemies directly, without self-pity or special pleading. The 1972 crayon "Self-Portrait" is an exorcism image—a livid skull with wild, half-blind eyes and a mouth like the muzzle of a doomed animal.

The exhibition's final image is a pendant to this one—a bleached-out "Self-Portrait" in black and white, the rocklike head eroded and broken off and balanced so precariously on the withered trunk that a mere touch would send it toppling. Nothing Picasso ever did conveys more powerfully the simultaneous acceptance and defiance of time, or his own stubborn belief in the liar's truth of art. "The artist," as he once said, "must know the manner whereby to convince others of the truthfulness of his lies." ♦

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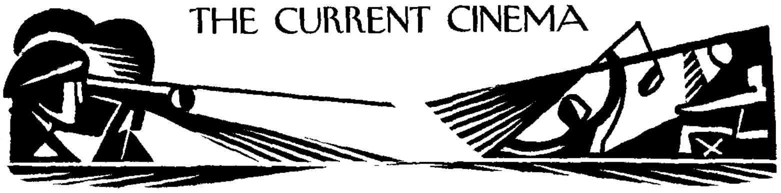
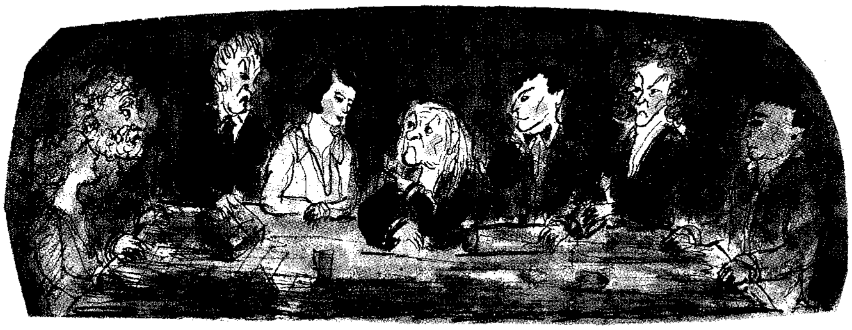


IDÉES FIXES

Stella Gibbons' farm and Andy Warhol's Factory.

BY TERRENCE RAFFERTY

JOHN SCHLESINGER'S "Cold Comfort Farm" is based on a 1932 novel (of the same name) by Stella Gibbons, which is one of the oddball classics of twentieth-century English literature—an eccentric rural comedy that suggests a shotgun marriage of Thomas Hardy and P. G. Wodehouse. The heroine, Flora Poste (played by Kate Beckinsale), is a bright, sophisticated young woman of twenty who discovers upon her parents' death that her family isn't nearly as well off as she thought. The estate provides her with a paltry income of a hundred pounds a year; rather than look for a job, she decides to appeal to the charitable instincts of obscure relatives, and accepts an invitation from a cousin, Judith Starkadder (Eileen Atkins), to live at the Starkadder farm—the aptly named Cold Comfort—in Sussex. Flora, who plans to spend the next thirty years of her life gathering material for "a novel as good as 'Persuasion,' " finds when she arrives at her new home that she's not exactly in Jane Austen country: neither sense nor sensibility seems ever to have been a feature of life at Cold Comfort Farm. The house is gloomy, the fields are barren, the animals are worthless, and the people are, in their various ways, ignorant and barbaric. Judith proves to be a thin, fearful middle-aged woman who depends on the Tarot for guidance, her trembling fingers always turning up cards that confirm her direst suspicions. Her husband, Amos (Ian McKellen), runs the farm, ineptly, and preaches terrifying sermons—lurid, painstakingly detailed descriptions of the tortures of the damned—to a congregation known as the Church of the Quivering Brethren. The household's presiding spirit is Flora's elderly aunt, Ada Doom (Sheila Burrell), whose entire philosophy is expressed by the axiom "There have always been Starkadders at Cold Comfort Farm"—its corollary being that no one can ever abandon the ancestral home—and who never leaves her room, because, as she declares at every opportunity, she once "saw something nasty in the woodshed."



A grim view of the agrarian life: denizens of Cold Comfort Farm.

JULIA LICHT

This is obviously a rather grim view of the agrarian life. Not everyone at Cold Comfort Farm is as dour as Judith, Amos, and Ada, but even the less alarming characters appear dim and stunted: the amiable, doltish farmhand Adam Lambsbreath (Freddie Jones); Judith and Amos's young daughter, Elfine (Maria Miles), who protects herself from her mad family by affecting—not very successfully—a kind of Pre-Raphaelite etherealness; and her brother Seth (Rufus Sewell), a smoldering bare-chested hunk who dreams of Hollywood and marks time by luring ripe local girls into the hayloft. The screenplay, by Malcolm Bradbury, preserves the novel's withering satire of rural inanity and iner-

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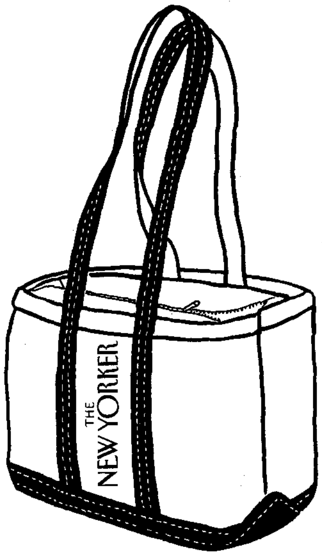

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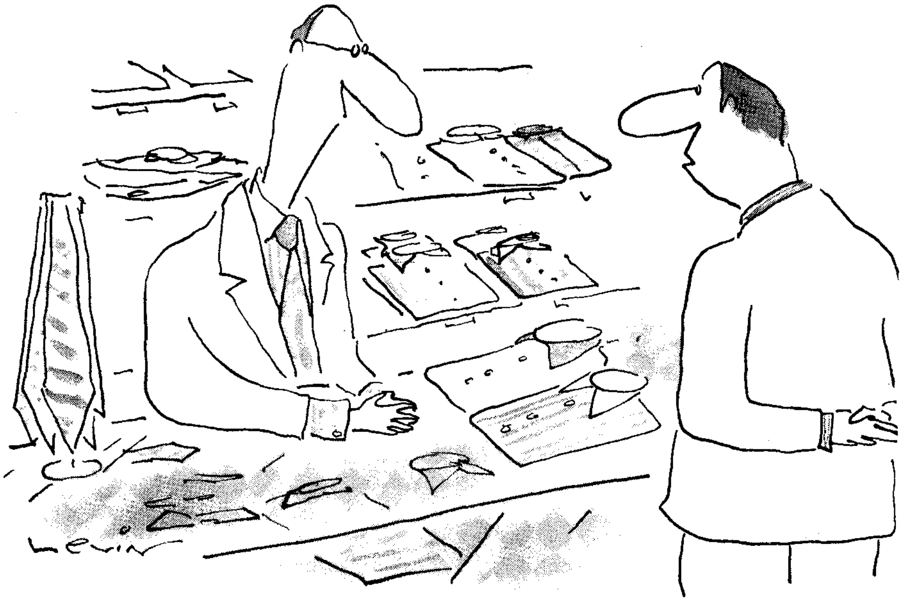

"Something collarless. I'm being guillotined."

• •

tia while avoiding (as Gibbons also did) the snobbish tone that might easily have ruined the material. If the point of the story were merely to make sport of pathetic bumpkins, the humor would pall pretty quickly. But although "Cold Comfort Farm" plays the Starkadders' follies to the hilt, Schlesinger and Bradbury have the intelligence to realize that the richest source of comedy here is really the heroine's reaction to this lunatic alternative universe. Flora is wholly unimpressed by the aura of dank despair that pervades Cold Comfort Farm, and hilariously certain of her ability to dismantle the foolish customs of generations of Starkadders and, of course, to replace them with the principles of happy, sensible people like herself.

Most of the movie, therefore, consists of scenes in which a Starkadder does or says something outrageous while Flora smiles sweetly and looks nonplussed. The great joke of "Cold Comfort Farm" is that the heroine absolutely refuses to acknowledge the power of her relatives' glum, suffocating imaginative landscape; she skims over it as she would a novel that bored her. Kate Beckinsale's charming performance cannily emphasizes the breezy, shallow quality that renders Flora immune to the toxic atmosphere of Cold Comfort Farm and enables her to dash off prescriptions to cure its inhabitants of all that ails them. This young actress is clearly as strong-minded as the character she plays; she maintains her composure—and remains the focus of our attention—while the veteran character actors attempt to dazzle her, and us, with their virtuosity. Atkins, Jones, and Burrell are all in good form here; and so is Stephen Fry, playing the oafish litterateur Mybug, who, unintelligently, tries to woo the level-headed heroine with muddled streams of pseudo-Lawrentian rhetoric. McKellen is much more frightening as Amos Starkadder than he was as Richard III, and he's sublimely funny besides. His sermon to the Quivering Brethren is a small masterpiece of comic acting: as he evokes the fires of Hell, his listeners quake and sweat, but he looks oddly content, as if he were simply warming himself by the hearth.

To supply the occasional grace note of weary urbanity, the movie relies on the imperious Joanna Lumley (of "Absolutely Fabulous"), who plays Flora's fashionable London confidante, Mrs. Smiling. Lumley has perfected a look of vaguely reptilian sangfroid and a jaded, deadpan delivery, which combine to make her a wonderfully suggestive caricature of the woman of the world; here she's a wealthy widow who listens sympathetically to her young friend's schemes while deftly avoiding any active participation in them. And it's Lumley who speaks the lines that define this picture's modest but confident spirit. When Elfine, on a visit to London with Flora, gushes that an upcoming dance will be "such fun," Mrs. Smiling bestirs herself—reluctantly and with infinite pedagogic condescension—to correct the girl's naïve error: "It's going to be amusing or diverting—*not* 'such fun.' " "Cold Comfort Farm" establishes an amusing-or-diverting tone early and, satisfyingly, sticks to it. Schlesinger, whose style is always more even-tempered and more assured when he's on English soil, maintains a steady but unhurried rhythm and a light, cheerful mood that seems to reflect the brisk sanity of the picture's heroine. In the end, Flora, having rearranged and tidied up the life of everyone at Cold Comfort Farm, departs with a pleasant young suitor and wisely renounces her ambition to be a novelist: adept as she is at manipulating reality, her methods are more those of a general—of a clever, determined tactician—than those of an artist. She's Jeeves in skirts, subverting the blind workings of Fate to her own ends, and she's smart enough to beat a hasty retreat as soon as her own machinery has been set in motion—and before the native gloom can return. Like this sly movie, she's content to engineer diversions, and doesn't push her luck.

ON the other hand, Mary Harron's "I Shot Andy Warhol" is a textbook example of what can happen to moviemakers who don't know when to quit. In June, 1968, a desperate, deranged woman named Valerie Solanas ambushed the artist Andy Warhol at his workplace, the Factory, and shot him three times, nearly killing him. Solanas, who turned herself in soon after the crime, instantly achieved the sort of intense, short-lived notoriety that Warhol, earlier the same year, had alluded to in his memorable epigram: "In the future, everybody will be world-famous for fifteen minutes." The would-be assassin, the author of a play called "Up Your Ass" and a radical-feminist tract called the "S.C.U.M. Manifesto" (the letters stand for "Society for Cutting Up Men"), had hoped to persuade Warhol to patronize her literary career, and her constant pestering hadn't produced the desired result: all she had to show for her efforts was one small part in a movie, for which she was paid twenty-five dollars. Warhol was not the warmest of men, and his indifferent manner obviously frustrated Solanas: she became fixated on him and eventually worked herself into a paranoid lather that culminated in the shooting. After that violent act, the "S.C.U.M. Manifesto"—photocopies of which she had been selling on the street—was published as a book, with her picture on the cover.

This is not, on the face of it, a terribly interesting story. It's a real-life variant of the "King of Comedy" motif: an ambitious, untalented nobody is obsessed with a celebrity, is rebuffed, and becomes very, very angry. This sort of pathology is inherently undramatic; it's static, and the resonance it gives off is thin. The only way to use characters like these effectively is to keep them in the background—lurking in the shadows of a cheap serial-killer melodrama, say. The title "I Shot Andy Warhol" has a promisingly sleazy B-movie ring to it, but the film turns out to be an insufferably high-minded bio-pic, flashy but conventional: although Harron interrupts the action with black-and-white sequences of Solanas (Lili Taylor) looking straight into the camera and reciting passages from the "S.C.U.M. Manifesto," the movie is square enough to include scenes from the heroine's college days, which are intended to dramatize the evolution of her "feminism." The director and her co-screenwriter, Daniel Minahan, seem bent on portraying Solanas as a complex, tragicomic figure, but their protagonist can't bear the weight they've put on her, and Taylor's monotonous performance doesn't do much to lighten the load: Solanas's dementia seems full-blown right from the start, so there's nowhere to go with it. And since the narrative has no suspense—we know what Valerie Solanas is going to do—the movie just gets progressively more annoying.

As in a Merchant Ivory picture, most of the energy of "I Shot Andy Warhol" appears to have been channelled into a fanatically scrupulous re-creation of period décor. The languid-hysterical atmosphere of the Factory feels accurate, and everyone in the Warhol crowd looks right, even Warhol himself: Jared Harris (son of the actor Richard) plays the artist wittily, with a hesitant, zombielike gait and a perpetual "What am I doing here?" expression. And the performances of Michael Imperioli, as the bitchy Factory luminary Ondine, and Stephen Dorff, as the breathy blond transvestite "superstar" known as Candy Darling, supply some fleeting moments of decadent fun. But vivid local color and a handful of amusing performances don't add up to much of a movie. In its party mood, "I Shot Andy Warhol" is fairly entertaining; it's too bad the guest of honor is such a drag. An hour and forty minutes of Valerie Solanas is too much. She had her requisite fifteen minutes of fame twenty-eight years ago, and it was more than she deserved. ♦

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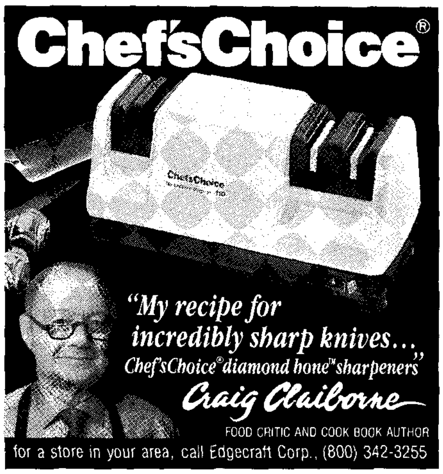

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BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

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—*USA Today*

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I would have come up there personally, except that urgent business on behalf of a very fine client is detaining me here. But my jet is fuelled and ready.

Sincerely,
F. Lee Bailey
Tallahassee, Fla.

P.S. It turns out my jet won't be available after all. Do they have commercial flights into Helena?

Dear Mr. Kaczynski,

Greetings! Perhaps I can be of some assistance. Most important, we need to get this case moved out of Buffalo Dung, Montana, to Berkeley where we'll get a jury of peers who won't sit up all night drinking beers. Those people up there look as if they'd all been swimming in the same gene pool too long and someone forgot to add chlorine. Also, my Rolls-Royce would not take kindly to driving over cattle guards. As for those so-called bombs in your cabin, we'll tell the jury "if they did not detonate, you must exonerate."

Sincerely,
Johnnie Cochran
Los Angeles, Calif.

Dear Mr. Kaczynski,

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I *wrote that.* I also do some painting.

I'm not saying it will be easy. Westerners don't make easy promises. What they do is spit on their hands and go to work. The F.B.I. has found material in your cabin that might lead a jury to suspect you weren't just tinkering with new recipes for jackrabbit: specifically, bombs, trigger devices, saltpeter, sulfur, and ammonium nitrate, and also what appears to be the original draft of that manifesto they printed in the newspapers and this here piece of paper they found with the words "hit list" written above "airline industry," "computer industry," and "geneticists."

As we say in these parts, "If you got a rope around your neck, it's no time to goose the horse." We'll want to be very deliberate about this and pick our own hunting ground.

Sincerely,
Gerry Spence
Jackson, Wyo.

Dear Mr. Kaczynski,

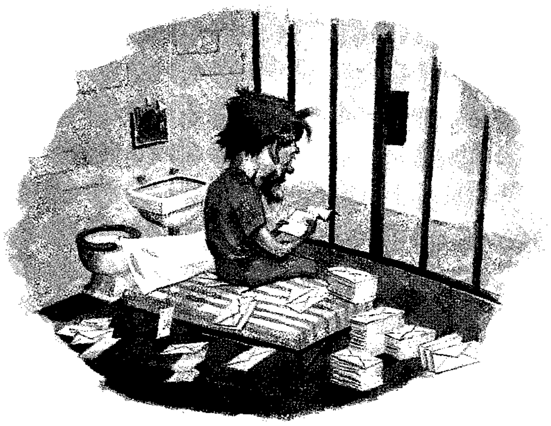
I'm in the middle of the tour for my book on the O. J. Simpson case, "Reasonable Doubts"—it's really excellent. Have you read it? It's getting great reviews. I don't want to sound defeatist, but in my opinion you're going to need the best appeals lawyer in the country. And, since I'm already halfway through the manuscript for the book about your appeal, you might as well hire me, right?

Let me set you at ease. First, I would take you on without charge. The deal for the book and movie about your case, which I've already signed, will cover my costs.

Second, I am not the kind of lawyer who asks his client improper questions, like "Did you try to decapitate your wife?" or "Did you pump your wife so full of insulin in the eighties that she's still asleep in the nineties?" That's not my role. My role is to uphold the Bill of Rights by establishing that a bailiff picked his nose during the voir dire and tainted the entire proceeding. Call me.

Sincerely,
Alan Dershowitz
Cambridge, Mass.

P.S. If you have any casting ideas for who should play you—Eastwood? Van Damme?—let me know right away. They want to move on this quickly. ♦



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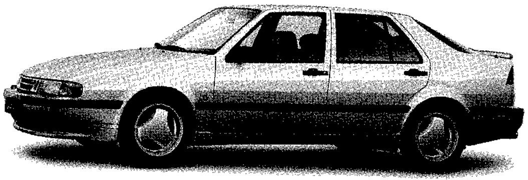

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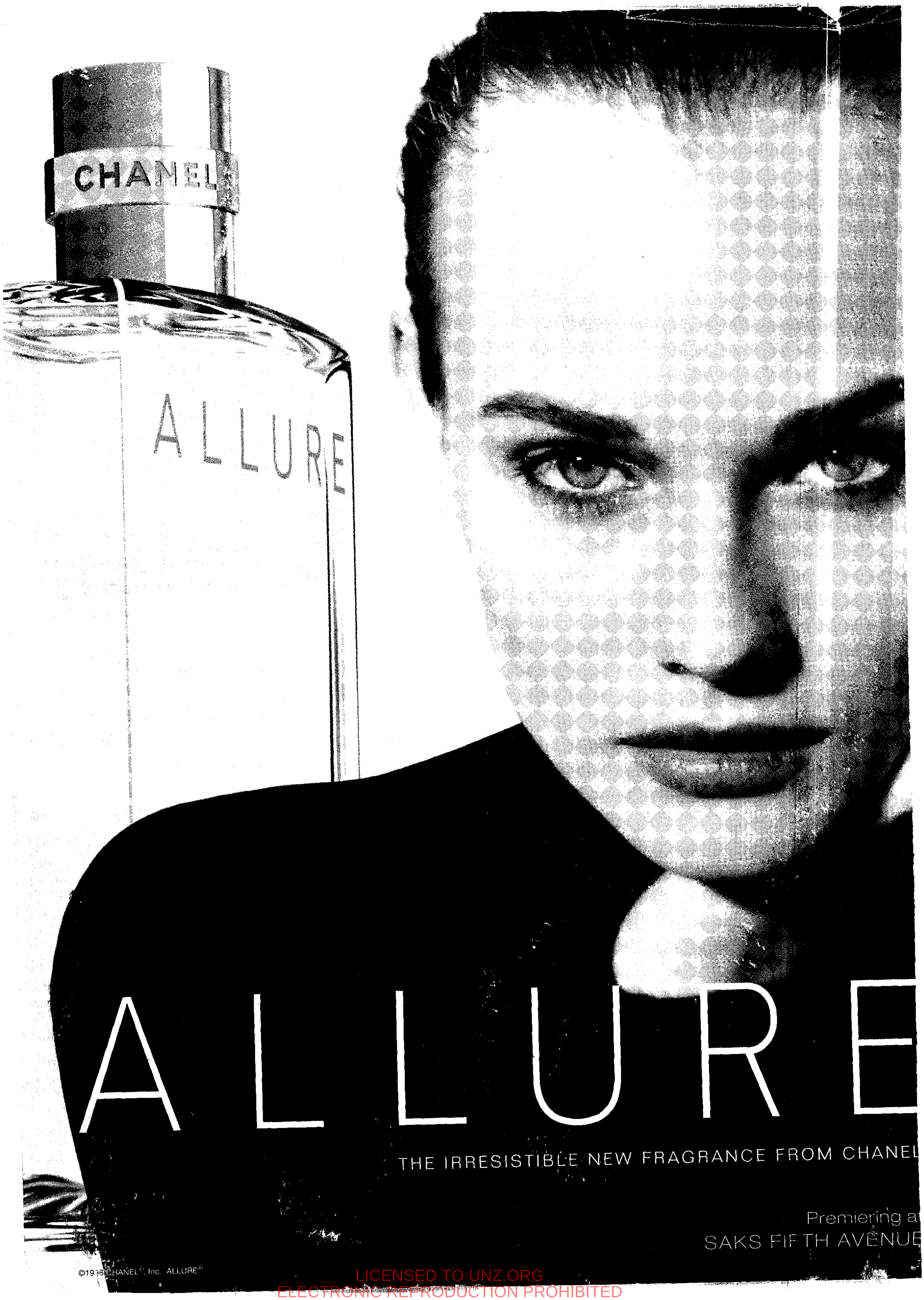
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